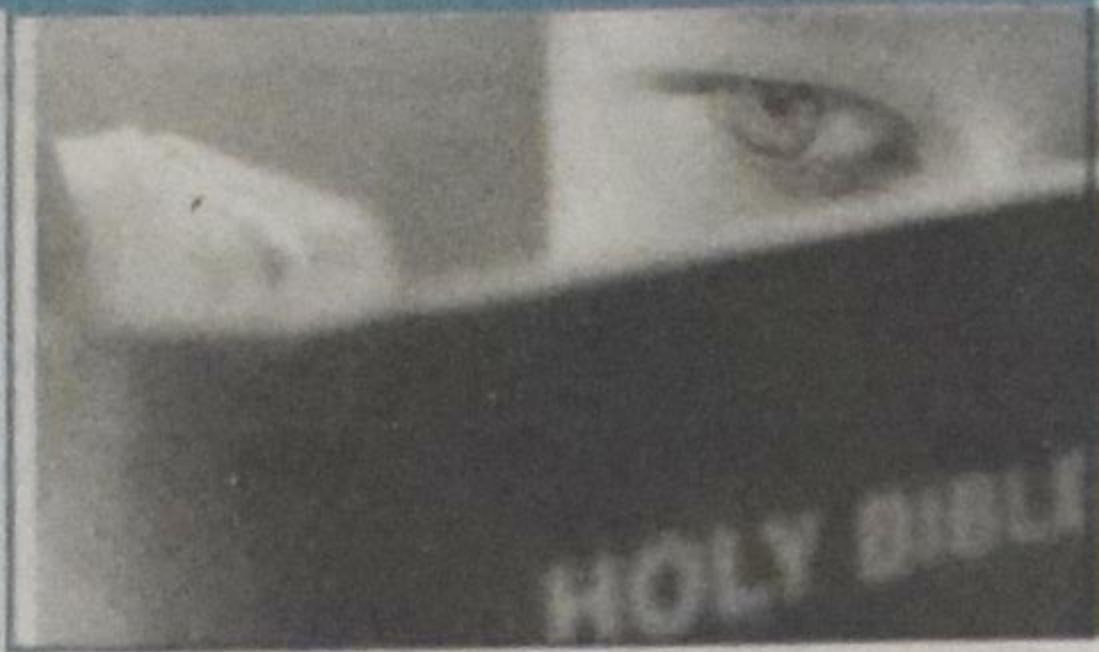




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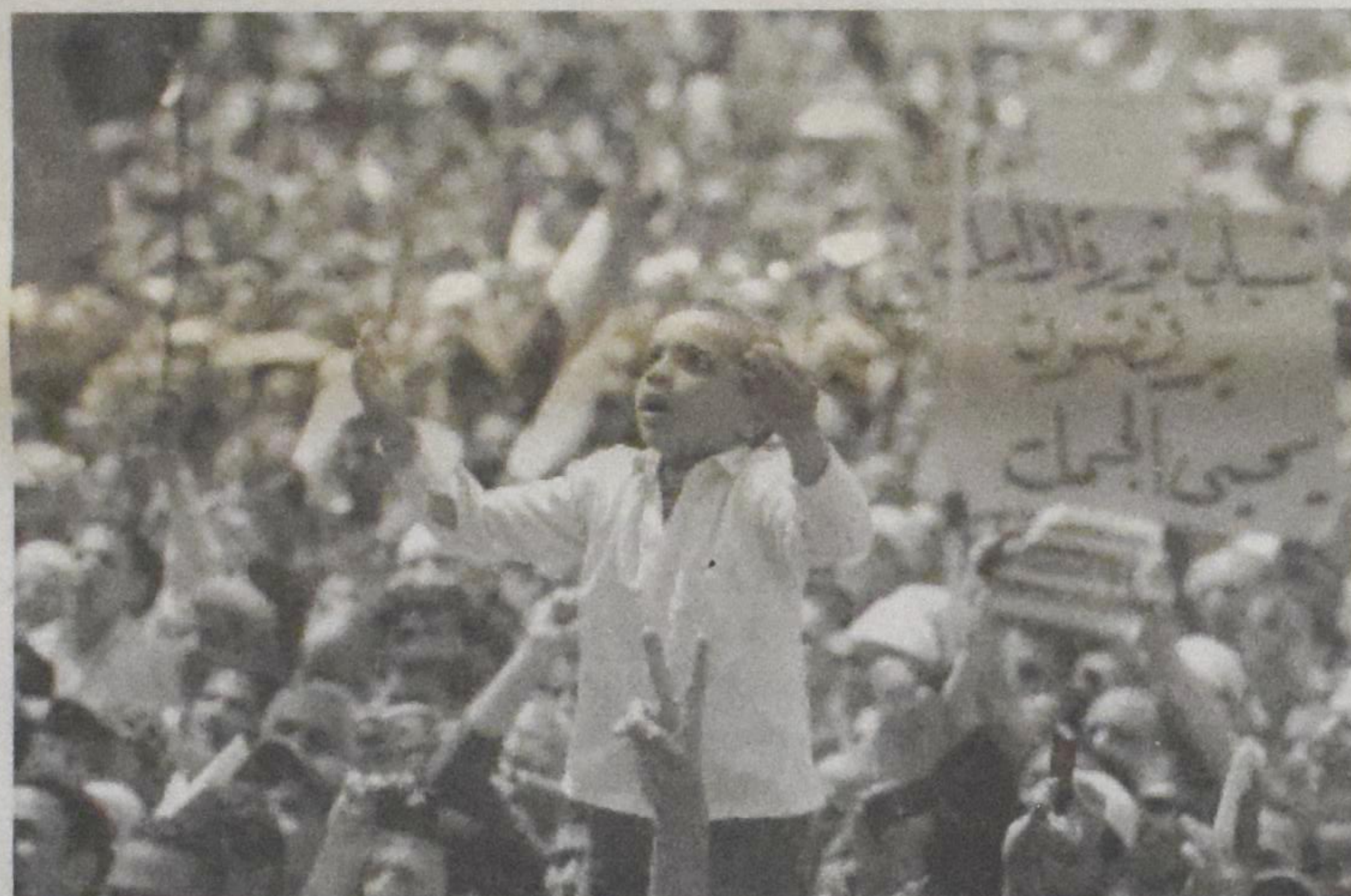
Rebuilding Egypt: Life after the revolution

Anne Zaki

CAIRO, Egypt – “Bring lots of pepper spray,” my brother said jokingly on the phone when he learned that I would be visiting Egypt in March. “You’ll make a fortune selling it here nowadays.”

Much has been written about the Egyptian Revolution that ousted President Mubarak after his 30-year reign. The world took its hat off for what Egyptians accomplished in 18 days. But it’s been 18 weeks since, and with the media’s attention understandably turning to other ongoing, and sadly more violent, revolutions in Yemen, Syria and Libya, not much is written about Egypt today. So please allow me to give you a glimpse into what life there is like now.

On many levels life is back to normal after it halted for weeks in late January and February. People have returned to work, schools have resumed their sessions, shops are re-opened and traffic flows through city streets once barricaded by the military. But it’s definitely a “new normal” – an Egypt we’ve never known before: women carry pepper spray in their purses for fear of reported mugging and kidnapping, men keep handguns under their driver’s seats to fight off potential car-jackers, and army tanks sit on street corners to protect civilians against the 30,000 thugs released in February by the formerly corrupt police. Daily demonstrations are still erupting in various cities by underpaid union workers, repressed journalists, disgruntled university students, oppressed Christians and discon-



Boy prays at a rally to save what the revolution accomplished.

REUTERS

tented Islamists.

Towards the end of my time in Egypt, I visited Lebanon briefly and was astounded to hear my Lebanese friends assure me of their prayers for Egypt. How the tables have turned. We Egyptians, who’ve enjoyed years of peace and stability, had always been the anchor of prayer in the region where war and conflict had become synonyms to nations like Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq. Now we find ourselves on the receiving, and needful, end of their empathetic prayers. A “new normal” indeed.

The ‘street’ finds its voice

In recent weeks, Egyptians’ deep trust and respect for the military has gradually eroded. Feelings of mistrust and suspicion rose when a military-sponsored referendum over constitutional amendments produced a result of 77 percent approval. This under-

mining of the military’s authority has grown with their new govern-

ing philosophy of acquiescing to “whatever the street says,” whether that means deposing a qualified Christian governor a few days after his appointment because conservative Islamists had sit-in demonstrations blocking the railroads, or cancelling day-light savings this spring because the people viewed it as an enduring symptom of Mubarak’s regime. No doubt the street has finally found its voice after decades of silence, but it feels like the little child who goes through a babbling phase en route to intelligible speech. We can only hope this babble will eventually mature into reasonable demands and expectations of the new government, and that, meanwhile, the

military will respond with more discerning wisdom.

I recall feeling my heart skip, when, for the first time in my life, I saw 80 percent of people on the subway reading newspapers, insisting on staying informed and politically engaged. Initial images of unity among young and old, Christian and Muslim, educated and illiterate, driven to Tahrir Square in the millions has inspired the world over. Sadly, this unifying hope of change has not turned into lasting gain. Instead, it seems likely that the present state of chaos and lawlessness will usher back disunity and disengagement if it is permitted to prevail. The cynicism which Egyptians once

See **Egypt** on p.2

The West weighs in on our new political landscape

Mike Wevers

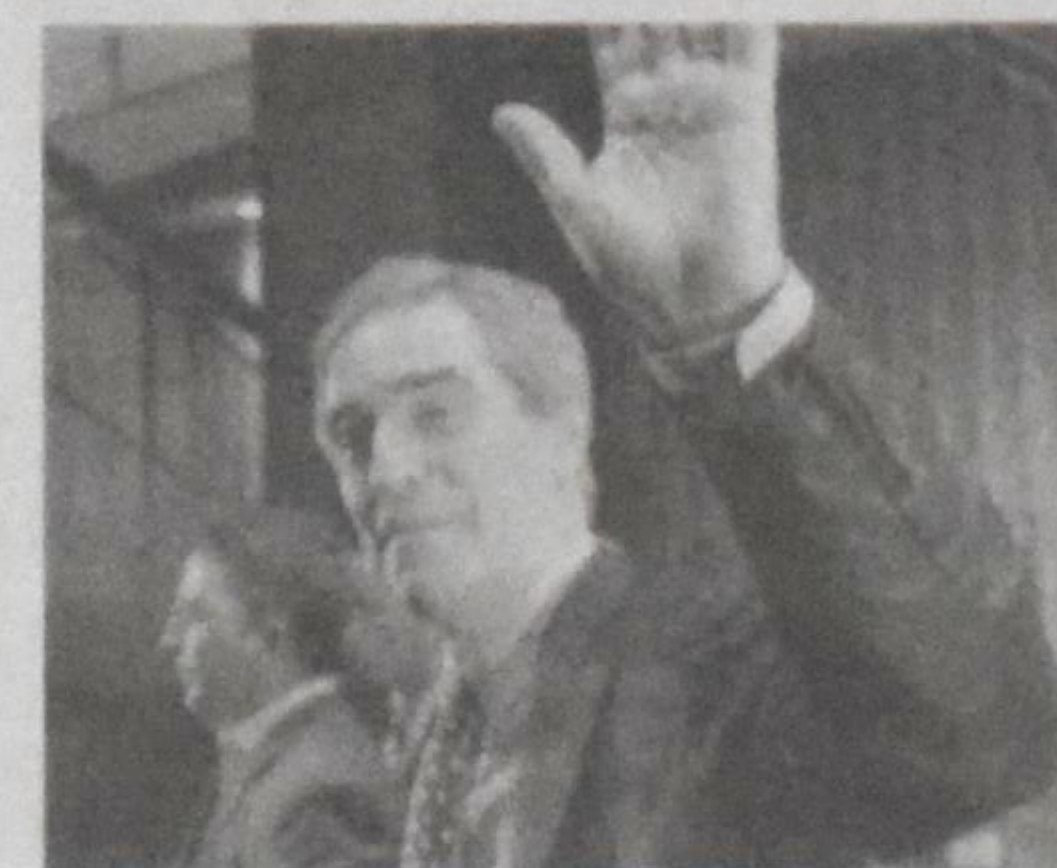
LETHBRIDGE, Alberta – An election that, at its start, was not expected to significantly change the political landscape in Canada ended tumultuously: a new majority government, a new Opposition, two decimated parties and a new one on the horizon. Certainly, most Albertans are happy that one of their own will lead a majority government in Ottawa – for the first time since the Great Depression. Despite continually stating that he governed well through Canada’s longest minority government, Harper could not quiet the pundits’ criticism that he was unable to make parliament work.



Harper celebrates his coveted majority government May 2.

Nonetheless, the Canadian electorate worked through that concern and the constant critique of a hidden agenda, entrusting Harper with a four year mandate.

Except for the short-lived Clark and Campbell governments, Albertans, indeed all Western Cana-



Ignatieff will share his political experience by teaching at the U. of Toronto in September.

dians, have watched the mantle of leadership shuffle between Ontario and Quebec. The mantle has most often been worn by the leader of the “natural governing party of Canada” – the Liberals. This elec-

See **Political landscape** on p.2

News

Egypt....continued



An Egyptian repaints a fence as part of the post-revolution reconstruction.

disguised with humour, out of fear of the former oppressive regime, is starting to surface again. Now, unfortunately, the cynicism is no longer mixed with subtle humour but with patent anger and public cries of intolerance.

Islam and the church

As promised, the revolution has birthed new freedoms: to protest against injustices, to speak and

with suspected extremist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood (Al-Akhoan), the Muslim Group (Al-Jamaat), and the Ultra Conservative Muslims (Salafis). While each group is internally organized, together they show neither social coherence nor unity in their approaches toward politics, in how they view both the place and role of Sharia law in the new constitution, or the rights of Christians

write without the threat of arrest, and to report and investigate acts of corruption. Unfortunately, this also opens the door for expressions of extreme religious views by various Islamist groups. For 30 years, Mubarak kept Egypt's Muslims moderate by arresting (often without trial) members associated

and women in government offices. The Salafis, newest to this political stage, are seen by many as the major threat to Egypt's secular civil state.

For all of Mubarak's corrupt and oppressive practices, his determination to keep Islamic extremism at bay is what ensured the safety of the church in Egypt in recent years. Within days of his deposing, some Islamic extremist groups started to shamelessly bash the Coptic minority in the national media; another extremist group destroyed a church in Atfeeh; another cut a Christian man's ear according to Sharia law for rumours that he was dating a Muslim girl, and another killed 13 people and wounded 60 others in an attack on the predominantly Christian neighbourhood of Moqatam. Even as I write this, Salafis just burned down two Coptic Orthodox churches in Embaba, killing 13 people and injuring 223, both Muslims and Christians.

Christian families have been fleeing Egypt in bunches over the past three months; in fact, three of my personal acquaintances left for Australia and the U.S. during my two-week visit. And yet there are others who are determined to

stay and live out their calling as Christ's presence. I was grateful to attend one of many public lectures offered by churches prior to the referendum to provide their



For all of Mubarak's corrupt practices, his determination to keep Islamic extremism at bay ensured the safety of the church in Egypt in recent years.

youth with political education and resources for voting. I was moved by the seminary's decision to host a blood drive to meet the shortage in the blood banks, due to recent acts of violence. I was encouraged, also, by the Bible Society's new pamphlets, cleverly picking up on the national theme of "Re-building Egypt" by offering the story of Nehemiah rebuilding the wall. And just this week, I discovered

two Christian families who will return, after years of living abroad, to stand in solidarity with the Egyptian church. All these things plant in me a deep conviction that despite the current chaos, God is opening new doors for the gospel in Egypt. We must always pray and never lose heart (Luke 18:1).

To move forward, Egypt's public education system needs to see fundamental change, its economic and governing structures need reform, and the Egyptian spirit of unity in a culture of religious tolerance and respect needs renewal. The country also needs to restore safety to Egyptian cities in order to regain the tourists' trust.

My prayer for the church is that we remain engaged and invested in the present and future of our country, holding in tension the truth that we are in the world but not of it. To do

otherwise is to tear ourselves from the forming fabric of the new Egypt, only to find ourselves living on a margin of our own design.

Anne Zaki is a Middle East ministry coordinator for the CRC in North America as well as Associate Pastor of Kelowna CRC in British Columbia.



Justice served, justice pending.

Amid the chaos, there are still signs of hope. The courtrooms and the Ministry for Illegal Gain Affairs are busy investigating crimes of corruption, calling into account former heads of government and leaders of the disbanded National Democratic Party. Justice is yet to be served, however, for the many innocent human activists and journalists who have been unjustly imprisoned or exiled.



Blogger Michael Nabil was sentenced to three years in prison for criticizing the army's violent methods.

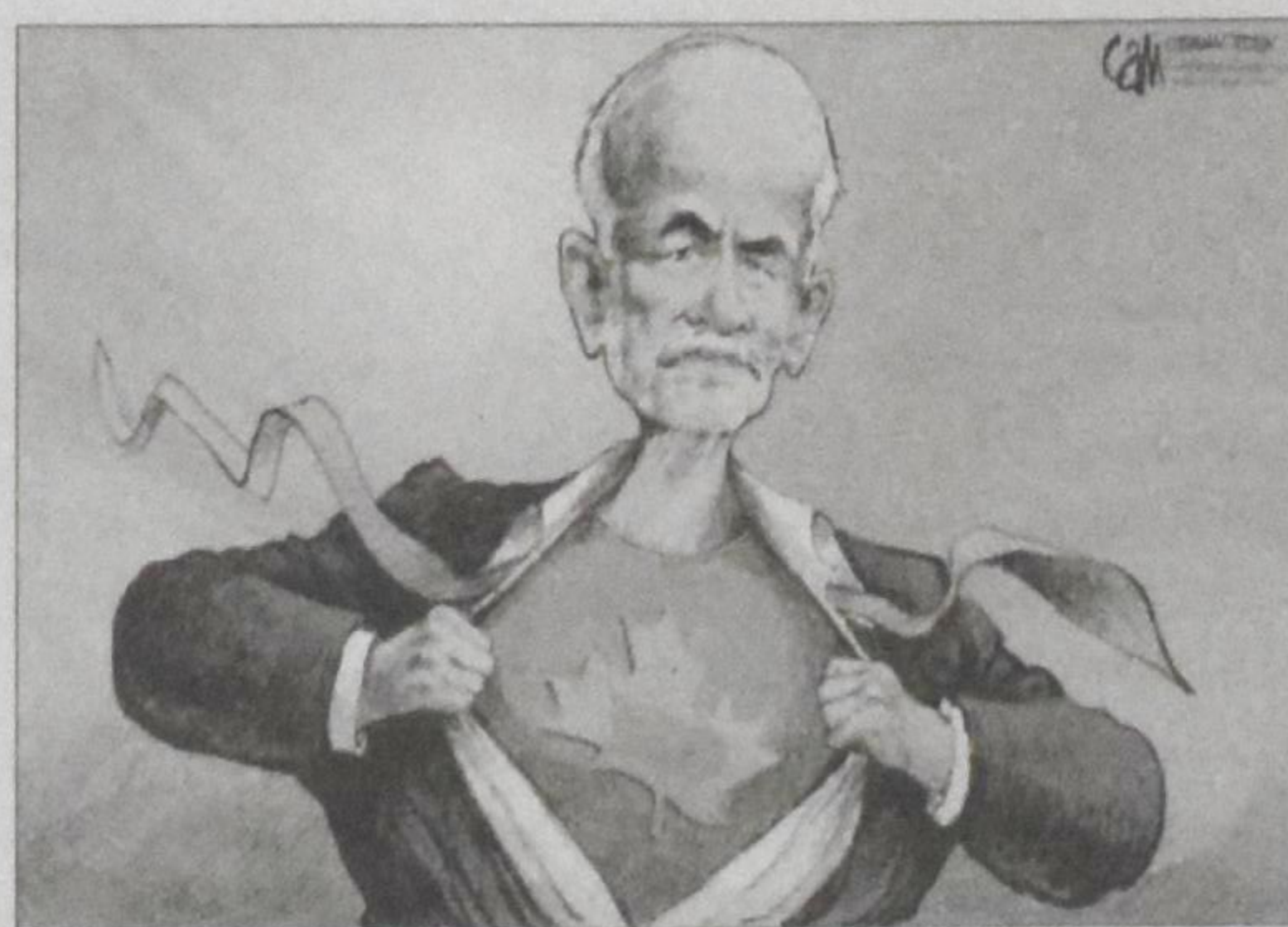
Political landscape ...continued

tion will hopefully finally put to rest Alberta's long standing distrust of Ottawa over the reviled Trudeau government's National Energy Program. Since the NEP's devastation of the Alberta economy, which followed the defeat of the Clark government, the Conservatives have owned Alberta.

An interesting note from 1980 was Clark's confidence that the Creditistes (the Quebec Social Credit Party) with six seats, and

the balance of power, would not help bring him down because the party wouldn't survive another federal election. Clark was wrong on the parliament vote but right on the election. The Quebec party lost all of its six seats and disappeared. Gilles Duceppe did not get the same heads-up in this election. With some hindsight, it can be argued that he helped the Bloc's demise by forcing the polarized choice between a

Harper majority or minority. The Quebec electorate, seizing on this choice, energized the orange wave (more like a tsunami in Quebec) that propelled Jack Layton and his NDP to their best showing ever, and the coveted position of the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. In Ottawa, that would be



The NDP made an historic leap to official Opposition.

the government-in-waiting. **A House united?**

And thankfully they are waiting. Although Layton defends the tender footedness of his new caucus as being fine, we should breathe a sigh of relief that the reigns of power are distant. Hopefully, the parliamentary process will refine the neophytes into well-respected Members of Parliament capable of someday leading government (are

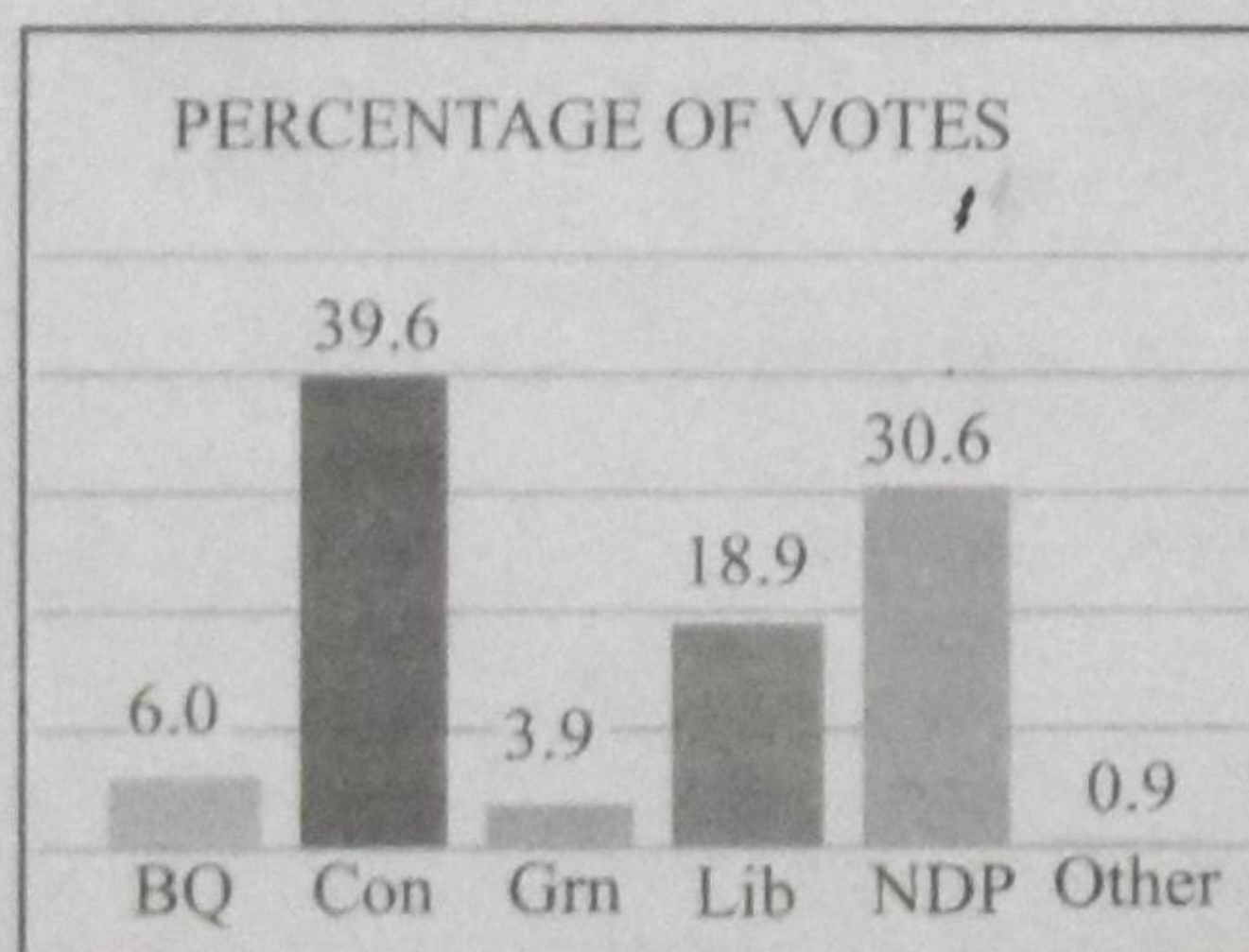
Quentin Durgens episodes available in the CBC archives?). The Quebecois electorate definitely voted for the man, Jack Layton. We can be heartened they also supported a federalist party. This may prove difficult for Jean Charest, because the Quebecois may keep the sovereigntist cause alive strategically by re-electing a Parti Quebecois government provincially.

And whither the Liberals? It is too early to sound their death knell. Ignatieff ran an unremarkable campaign and paid the price. He certainly was hampered by the Tory attack ads. However, a leader and a party which forced the election should have had a strategy to deal with those negatives and to move the electorate to respond

more positively.

But the election belongs to Stephen Harper. A self-professed policy wonk who now has the opportunity to deliver. He's a believing man, safely invoking a concluding blessing from the national anthem in his speech "God keep our land glorious and free." What do Canadians expect of him besides continued economic stability? We already know the Conservative government is up to that task. But should we not expect more? Harper tantalized us in his victory speech – saying he wants to achieve more of what Canada can be. That may take more than four years to deliver.

Mike Wevers is an independent consultant, retired from the Alberta Government as an Assistant Deputy Minister. He lives in Edmonton.



News

Everyday Christian

Cathy Smith



Girls and royal role-models



The Royal Wedding went viral before it was even posted to YouTube. Estimates of two billion global spectators were bandied about. Every possible detail of pomp and ceremony was milked for the sake of media interest ... royal protocol, royal traditions, previous royal weddings, Westminster Abbey and Buckingham Palace, and, above all, Catherine's wedding dress and all the fashion and glamour associated with being the royal bride. From what I gather, apparently everyone was delighted with her poise and elegant style. In light of Kate's conservative choice, fashion editors immediately predicted a trend toward more demure bridal designs. There were glowing comparisons to Princess Grace of Monaco.



The newly-minted Dutchess is already setting trends.

I followed some of the media coverage. I enjoyed the sumptuous pageantry, the regal and dignified music and all the hoopla. It was fun to be included in a party, if only vicariously.

The moment that touched me the most deeply, though, was one that broadcasters glossed over and no one bothered to blog about. That was the moment when 1900 guests at Westminster Abbey and hundreds of thousands on the streets of London joined their voices and sang "God Save the Queen." There was a brief cameo of the Queen, her head modestly bowed, not singing, of course, and beside her, Prince Philip, her husband, head held high, clearly singing. Petitioning God to bless his queenly wife's glorious reign. It was an astonishing moment for me, a

Christian, a woman, someone who has struggled mightily to understand my role as a woman in my church and in God's kingdom. Someone who has spent most of her adult life thinking, writing, praying, wondering whether she's allowed to lead and how to do so without alienating or offending other brothers and sisters in the Lord. A lifetime of inner conflict about reconciling leadership and service.

Accountable to God

I could do worse than look to the Queen. Wikipedia tells me that not only is she the Queen of England, she is the figurehead of the 54-member Commonwealth of Nations. And she's not just a titular ruler. Those in the know consistently commend her work ethic. She is an active and informed head of state. At 85, it doesn't appear that she intends to give up her reign anytime soon. Plans for her Diamond Jubilee, 2012, are already underway.

As the British monarch, she is also the Supreme Governor of the Church of England and has openly expressed her Christian faith in the public square: "To many of us, our beliefs are of fundamental importance. For me the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life. I, like so many of you, have drawn great comfort in difficult times from Christ's words and example."

Queen Elizabeth is a living role-model – for Princess Catherine, for the young girls who watched the fairy-tale event dreaming of their own wedding day and for middle-aged women like me. Her royal example is instructive: Be more than a figure or even a figurehead. Put duty first. Take your calling seriously. Expect the men in your life, your husband and sons, to be supportive. Demand much of yourself, even into your old age.

There's another queen I could look to, of course. Queen Esther. A woman who, like Diana or Kate, undoubtedly experienced the heady influence of blushing beauty and the power of stylish femininity, but who chose a wiser, grander leadership in service of her God and her people. A woman of epic daring and courage who demanded the utmost of herself.

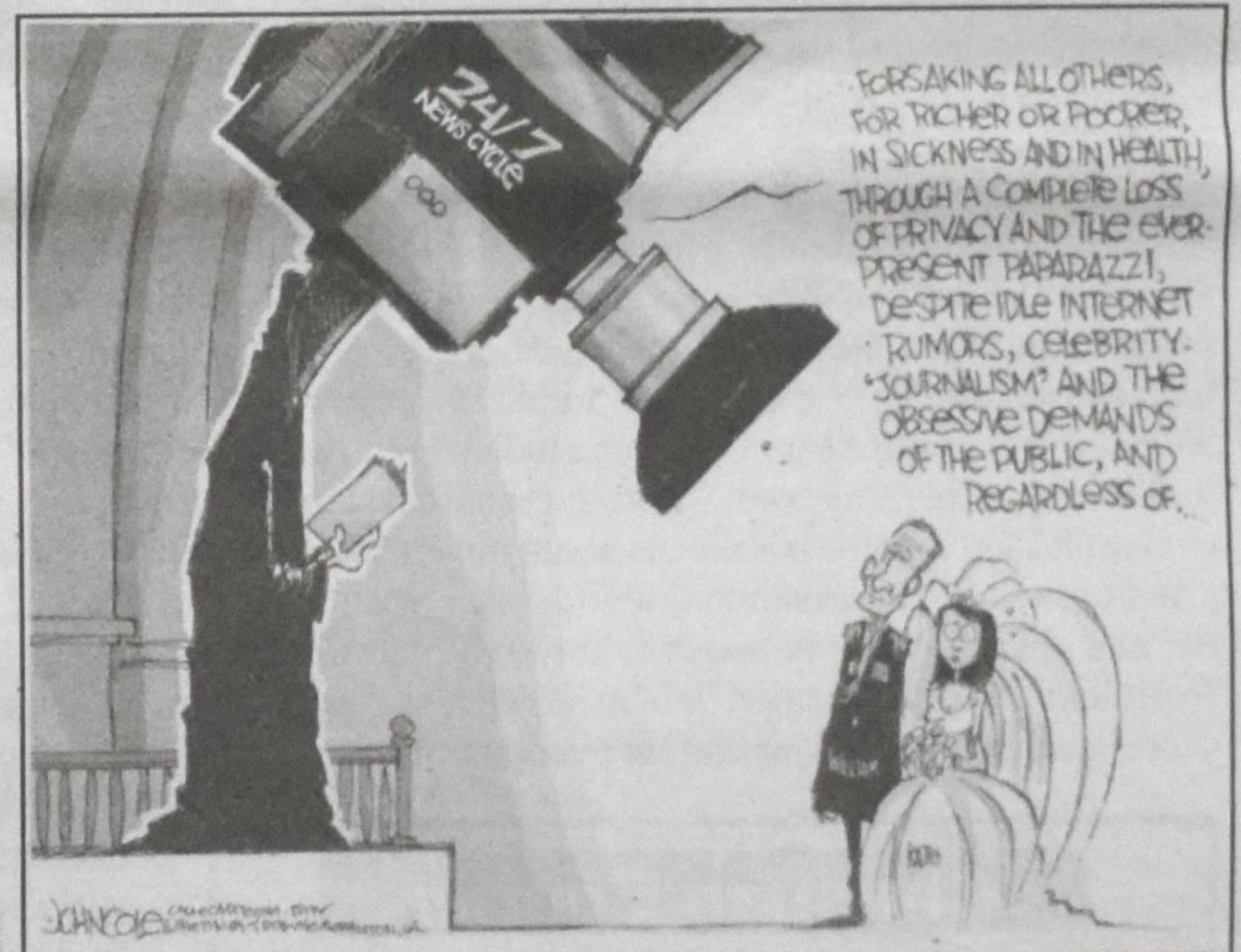
Today, I act as a quiet standard-bearer for

women in a congregation where they are not yet permitted to serve in ecclesiastical office. I seek to lead patiently and diplomatically in whatever small ways I can. I consider myself, not a queen, not a princess, but an ambassador. I encourage women, all you ordinary women like me, fresh-faced cover girls or wrinkled matriarchs, to be royal ambassadors for Christ. Ambassadors for the Saviour who calls you to represent him and serve your people. Yes, your people. Your church, your family, your community. Even those who might misunderstand or spurn your leadership and service. For who knows who might be watching? Who knows but that you are an example to someone? Who knows but that you have come to such a position for such a time as this?



Inspirational Queen
Elizabeth.

Cathy Smith (cathy@christiancourier.ca) is features editor with CC. She lives in Wyoming, Ontario.



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Editorials

Christian education in Africa: the quest for deep roots



Dora Strooboscher

"What we badly need in South Africa, Africa and the entire world is a genuine, integral, reformational worldview that will be able to inspire Christians again to be fully present in a suffering and groaning world. We urgently need a salty Christianity that is capable of healing the wounded and preventing this world's increasing decay. Without this integrally Christian worldview, in which a critique of a society is a constituent part, it is meaningless to talk about social change" (*The Need for a Radical Christian Social Critique on Educational Practice*: CSE 11:1, 2007-2008).

This rallying call for Christian educators everywhere was issued by Dr. Samson Makhado, Director of the Association for Christian Schools in Africa. Samson is an extraordinary man of God. He was born in Limpopo, a northern rural province of South Africa. Living below the poverty line, Samson started his educational journey under a tree. When he got older, he entered into a rigorous training program towards replacing his grandfather as the next witch doctor, a position of high honour in his culture. Through a series of miraculous events, Samson eventually became principal of a Christian school and there met Hennie Slopsema, a retired educator from Ontario, Canada. She recognized his potential, and in the early 1990s, the boy whose education had started under a tree found himself studying at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto at her expense. There he was exposed to and became passionate about the possibilities of a reformational worldview. He had managed to manoeuvre through Apartheid's Bantu education (which he calls educational bondage) to his current freedom.

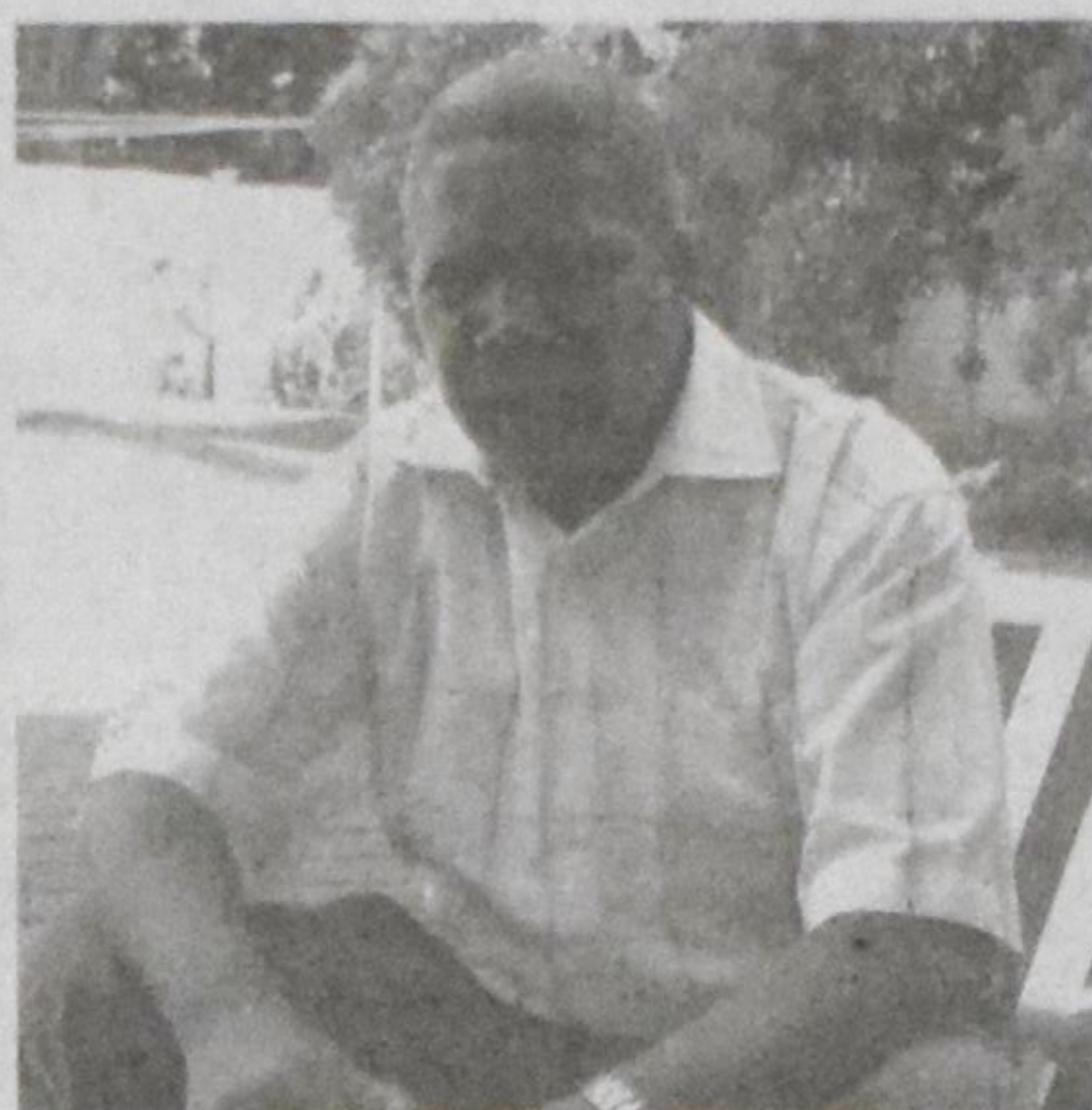
Samson's middle name is Balanganani, which means *go out and get scattered*. He has lived up to his name, scattering the seeds of this worldview wherever God placed him. The meaning of his middle name also captured the spirit that prevailed at the 2007 Round Table Conference which he organized. Delegates from 32 African countries and other continents gathered in Johannesburg to discuss Christian schooling in Africa.

Samson challenged all those who were present to adopt a paradigm shift in Christian educational practices. "Christian schools should prepare young people to carry out the work of the Father in the world today, partnering with him in his great plans, rather than hunkering down in a sheltered environment while awaiting the coming of Christ," he said. "Christians are at the crossroads of the biblical story with its call to faithfulness and shalom. Christian schools should play an increasingly dynamic role within the church and the broader community. They are called to be critically immersed in the issues of our day."

The African continent is experiencing an explosion in Christian education. Nigeria has 20 Christian universities, all committed to educating a new generation of young people who will transform not only Africa but the world. Daystar University College in Nairobi, Kenya, with its vision to develop servant leaders to serve communities and nations, has a student body of 1,500. In the Congo, 65 denominations have signed an agreement to work as one church, the Church of Christ in Congo (TCCC), for the sake of Christian education. TCCC represents seven universities, 17,000 schools, 77,000 teachers and 2.4 million children and has become a member of ACSI.

Firmly planted in faith

Although Samson is delighted with and thankful for this rapid growth of Christian schools, he also has concerns. He describes what is presently happening in Africa by using the metaphor of a tree. Some trees have roots that go out nearly horizontal, just under the surface of the ground rather than straight down. Such trees are typically found in places where there is plenty of water near the surface. They do not have to grow deep roots because they never lack for enough moisture, but they



Samson calls for a "salty Christianity" to prevent the world's decay.

do grow abundant leaves and healthy fruit. There is a problem with such trees, though. It doesn't take much to blow them over. For trees to grow tall, strong, and stand for years, God moves the water supply down so that the roots grow deeper. Christian schools in Africa will need to dig deeper and

deeper into a biblical, transformational worldview in order to grow strong roots.

That is an ongoing challenge as more and more countries, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi, cry out to him for help. Samson also knows he cannot do it without the help of others who are picking up the challenge. From them we hear wonderful testimonies that show that they "get it."

From Kenya: *Teachers rejoiced and blossomed as they saw the splendour of God in education through the glasses of the Bible.*

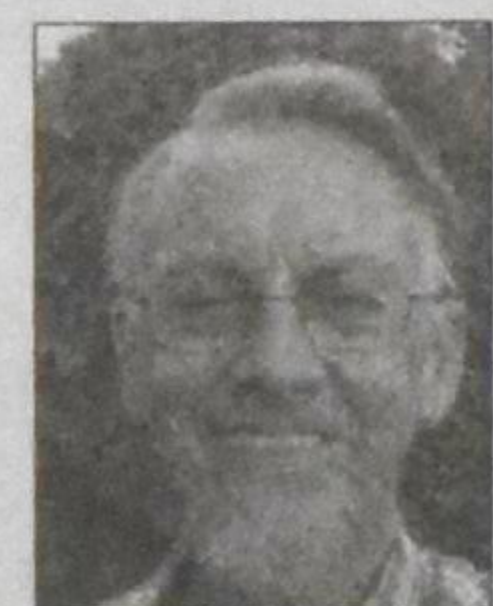
From Rwanda: *Before I attended these worldview workshops, I held the scientists who had made all these great discoveries in high regard. Surely, I thought, no one else, on, under or above the planet deserved the honour for their ability to 'unravel' the mysteries of the earth. That secular worldview came to an end when I realized that God is the Author of it all, the beginning and the end of knowledge. I pledged from now on to make him my principal consultant.*

From South Africa: *I was going to continue my research in the area of Physical Science but these workshops have opened my eyes. I now want to read and learn much more about this new way of seeing the world and my calling as a teacher.*

God is at work in a mighty way in Africa! He will lead and bless the search for a new supply of water so that Christian schools in that country develop deep roots. ✕

Dorothy Strooboscher is a retired teacher and curriculum writer who has spent the past eight years with her husband Marc, a retired principal, mentoring and lecturing to black Christian educators in Limpopo, South Africa, on behalf of Worldwide Christian Schools.

Christian education in Canada: troubling signs of wilting leaves



Bert Witvoet

As a cross-cultural mission partner in South Africa with Dora Strooboscher, her husband, Marc, and my wife, Alice, I have decided to write a brief companion piece to Dora's guest editorial.

Dora wrote about what is taking place in Africa, but I will talk about Christian education in Canada, the tree that I have heard Dr. Samson Makhado describe as having deep roots but whose leaves are beginning to wilt.

Is that a fair description? When you move around in African countries where Christian schools are springing up like mushrooms, the statement makes sense. Although Samson has witnessed a decline of spiritual life and a sharp decrease in church membership in Canada, his comment is especially focused on the health of Christian education in North America. Apart from schools in urban centres that have succeeded to draw students from a wide swath of Christian communities, quite a few Christian schools in North America that used to rely mainly on Christian Reformed communities for their growth are facing declining enrolments.

"Why is that?" I asked Ted Harris, principal of Smithville District Christian High School. Harris thinks the major reason is a declining birth rate. The new "large family" today is four or five children. It used to be seven or eight. Today the average is probably two children per family. Is a declining birth

rate a sign of a spiritual disease that attacks the tree? Can we say that today's generation of parents is not taking seriously the mandate of Genesis 1: "Be fruitful and multiply?" I will answer this question with a hesitant "No." Genesis 1 does not specify a number, and who will argue that a couple with two or three children is not multiplying?

Not that such couples are necessarily motivated by considerations of this earth's inability to sustain further growth. Their decisions are often based on the career ambitions of both parents, and on the cost of living in the midst of a society that, through constant bombardment of advertising, encourages all of us to spend our "hard-earned money" on many "necessary" things. This may well signal a spiritual problem that affects the fate of Christian education. Gone are the days that parents were willing to limit the family's diet to peanut butter sandwiches and other simple fare to make Christian education affordable.

Which leads us to what Ted Harris considers another contributing factor to the shrinking enrolment at Christian schools – a reduced commitment to send children to a Christian school at any cost. Other factors play a determining role, such as choosing a school that offers greater variety, especially at the secondary level, the high cost of tuition, the psychological and social needs of a child who wants exposure to a "different" environment, the inconvenience of extensive transportation, the desire of parents to

continued on p. 5

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Canada

Letters

The black hole of ecumenical relationships

I appreciate that the CRC and the Presbyterian Church in Canada are upgrading relations with each other (CC, April 11, 2011). According to CC, they now "pledge to work even more closely together in the future than they have in the past." That's great. May it come to pass.

It has not always been a relationship of cooperation. Every time I hear "Presbyterian," a deep regret resurfaces. When the Dutch emigrants originally established the CRC in Canada – mostly during the 1950s – the Presbyterian Church ignored their new Reformed compatriots and left it up to the American CRC to organize and settle us. It's too bad that the Presbyterians did not have the vision to welcome and embrace us into their already existing denomination. Instead of being a satellite of an American church, we would be part of a denomination with firm footing in Canadian history and culture. Instead of two small denominations, we would have a much stronger Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Canada. We would be able to address Canadian issues in Canadian Christian ways without needing the approval of American-majority synods meeting outside of the country. It is my prayer that the CRC has agreed upon new relationships with a church that now has more vision and imagination than it did only a few decades ago.

The Canadian media, however, hardly ever mentions Presbyterians – even less than they do CRC! So is it up to the CRC to instill vigour in its new partner? Does the CRC have enough vision and imagination to stimulate others?

There's also a marked lack of information among the CRC membership about such ecumenical

partnerships and co-operative ventures. The CC article indicates that the two churches have cooperated with each other in the past. How and where? Certainly not on the local level in Vancouver. It's as if the Presbyterians don't exist. It is time that denominational officials involved in such interdenominational ventures disseminate information about these projects. That holds not only for CRC-Presbyterian relationships, but for all other ecumenical relations as well. Neither the clergy nor the bureaucrats in Burlington or Grand Rapids own the church. The CRC is not a democracy, but neither is it supposed to have a hierarchy of professionals who play out their personal visions for the denomination behind the scenes and at best give brief reports to some obscure committees and eventually to the Board of Trustees. The black hole of ecumenical relationships in the CRC needs to be lit up so that the membership can be more involved, especially at local levels.

If we're going to have relationships with the Presbyterians, let's start locally – in Port Alberni, in Saskatoon, in Milford. Occasional combined services to begin with? I am going to write my CRC Council to get that ball rolling locally. No better place to start. In the meantime, would our representatives in Burlington provide us with more information, please? Bruce Adema, Director of Canadian CRC Ministries, I am calling on you to let the congregations know what's happening or, perhaps, stimulate local councils to pass on information.

John H. Boer
Vancouver, B.C.

When we take what is happening in third-world countries, where poverty, for example, is considered an invalid excuse for not sending a child to a Christian school, and compare that with what is happening to Christian education in the West, we cannot but conclude that the leaves are indeed beginning to wilt. Collectively we stand accused and guilty as charged.

Bert Witvoet is Contributing Editor with CC.
He lives in St. Catharines, Ontario.

Christian education....continued from p. 4

expose the child to a public school where their Christian faith will be tested – the list goes on.

I will leave all these considerations on the table without pronouncing judgment. All Christian parents must honestly and prayerfully weigh their reasons for sending or not sending their child to a Christian school. However, the clarion call, even among those who send their children to a Christian school, often is "quality education," instead of "transformational education." Parents want their children to be successful rather than agents of change.



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editor@christiancourier.ca before June 30, 2011.

What Rob Bell does right

I very much agreed with Angela [Reitsma Bick's] assessment that Rob Bell's theology is consistent with Protestant Liberalism ("The gospel according to Rob Bell," CC May 9). A great word to describe his book is 'heterodoxy.' Angela doesn't use this word but she definitely articulates the sloppiness and confusing nature of Rob's theology.

On the other hand, there is something to be appreciated about what Rob is doing here. I do not believe Rob is arguing against hell itself; I believe Rob is arguing against our perceptions about what hell is. Rob is not a writer of theology, nor do I believe he would call himself one. But Rob is a theological tease; he says things in a different way to get us to think. Thus, when Rob says that "eternal torment doesn't bring God glory," I don't think he's saying there is no hell. I think he's saying we've got to be careful about what we think hell is and what we communicate about it. Rob is tired of the Jerry Falwells and Pat Robertsons telling Hurricane Katrina victims and homosexuals that God hates them

and he will torment them eternally. We have to interpret Rob's words with this in mind. I don't think Rob is saying that God doesn't "discipline" people but that we have to be careful as Christians about what/how we communicate about God's "discipline," in the same way that Jesus was careful. We all know what John 3:16 says, but not everyone knows what John 3:17 says: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him." Rob is tired of Christians telling everyone they're going to hell when Jesus didn't speak about hell very often. This is where I agree with Rob and where we, even in the CRC, can learn from him. That being said, I agree with her final comments that most people will be confused at the end of this book; I was. I had to devote a lot of time and thought as to why I was so confused at the end. Everybody and their dog were asking me about this book. Ultimately, most people will be confused because I think Rob is.

Pastor Nick Van Beek
Fresno CRC, California

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News



Alabama: the wreckage of homes destroyed by recent tornadoes.

CRWRC extends aid to tornado blasted American South

SANFORD, N.C. (CRCNA) – “CRWRC-DRS has worked in numerous southern communities over the years helping them recover from hurricanes and tornadoes,” says CRWRC Disaster Response Services (DRS) director Bill Adams. “The destruction from [the] tornado outbreak in Alabama, however, rivals the worst we have seen in years. We are now developing plans for a long-term commitment to those who are affected.”

Working in concert with local and national disaster response organizations, regional managers Len and Carrie Blauwkamp, and team leaders Doug Van Der Meulen and Terry Reimink, made arrangements for additional volunteers to continue to address clean-up and roofing needs, provide emotional and spiritual support and coordinate planning for the longer-term response. (Volunteers were already working on clean-up from previous recent storms.)

The more than 250 tornadoes across the lower U.S. between April 25 and April 27, were cumulatively the most deadliest in the last decade. A stagnant severe-weather pattern sprouted the storms that hit hard in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Virginia and Tennessee. A U.S. federal emergency was declared in Alabama and a half dozen other states. Almost 300 people died in the tornadoes.

Heavy rain and high winds subsequently affected a large portion of the rest of the U.S., with power outages and flooding that has caused state-based emergencies from Kentucky to Ohio and as far north as the Dakotas and Minnesota. The cold, wet weather delayed the planting season on many farms in the nation’s breadbasket.

Reformed worship institute announces grants

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (CICW) has awarded more than \$400,000 in grants to support worship renewal in the U.S. and Canada. The grants will go to grassroots, long-term learning projects and programs in nearly 40 organizations and congregations.

This year, the program’s 12th, the awards will be given to support a variety of worship renewal projects representing 14 denominations in two Canadian provinces and 19 American states. An advisory board

of pastors and teachers from a variety of backgrounds assisted in the grant selection.

“These projects have much to teach us about how prayerful, resourceful leaders in a remarkable variety of contexts are thinking about the needs of the church and opportunities for ministry,” says CICW director John Witvliet. “We are eager to learn from them.”

Some of the grant winners include:

- ♦ A church in Georgia that will offer quarterly workshops examining how historic hymns, catechisms, prayers and sermons point worshipers to God.
- ♦ A presbytery in Iowa that will engage young people in leadership training, helping them lead worship in congregations throughout the presbytery.
- ♦ Churches that will hold ecumenical worship services and discussions for congregations who worship on an Indian reservation in South Dakota.
- ♦ A Catholic archdiocese in Texas that

New BBC head: Atheists intolerant of those with faith



LONDON (TCI) – Chris Patten, the new head of the BBC Trust has described atheists as “intolerant of those who have a faith.”

Lord Patten of Barnes took charge as British Broadcasting Corporation’s chairman of the trust on May 1. The BBC Trust governs the BBC, setting its strategy and appointing its director general.

Patten is also the chancellor of the University of Oxford and a former Governor of Hong Kong. He said, “It is curious that atheists have proved to be so intolerant of those who have a faith. Their books would be a lot shorter if they couldn’t refer to the Spanish Inquisition, but it is they who tend to have a level of Castilian intolerance about them.”

Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society, responded, “Lord Patten’s comments don’t bode well for his position as chairman of the BBC Trust. He is supposed to represent all viewers, not just Catholics or religious people and I am quite concerned that he will not be able to be objective when religion comes into conflict with free expression in program-making.”

Lord Patten’s comments follow a number of accusations of anti-Christian bias at the BBC. In January this year former BBC news anchor Peter Sissons warned that Christians are “fair game” for insults at the broadcaster while Muslims must not be offended. And in February 2011 it was revealed that the BBC had signed up for a second dose of a comedy about an inner city vicar which was self-proclaimed as “heretical” and “unholy.”

Last year Britain’s most senior Roman Catholic criticized the BBC for a “radically secular and socially liberal mindset.” Cardinal Keith O’Brien told *The Sunday Times* that the mindset “sadly taints BBC news and current affairs coverage of religious issues.” The Roman Catholic leader also called on the BBC to appoint a religion editor, something for which a Church of England bishop has also called.

Nova Scotia: Vatican decries bishop's actions, offers prayers for diocese

VATICAN CITY (CNA/EWTN News) – In response to the guilty plea of the bishop, who imported child pornography into Canada, the Vatican condemned “sexual exploitation in all its forms” and noted that in “a special way our thoughts and prayers are with the people of the Diocese of Antigonish and all the Atlantic region.”

The Vatican said it recognized “the confusion and anger that this case has engendered among many of the faithful,” adding, “we underscore our pastoral concern for those who have experienced great pain as a result of these events.”

Bishop Raymond J. Lahey, 70, was jailed on May 4 immediately after pleading guilty to importing child pornography. Lahey formerly led the Diocese of Antigonish, Nova Scotia. He was arrested in 2009 after Ottawa airport workers found him in possession of child pornography as he re-entered the country from a trip abroad. The bishop’s lawyer informed the court that he wanted to give up his right to bail and be directly imprisoned out of remorse for his actions.

The Vatican asserted that although “the civil process has run its course, the Holy See will continue to follow the canonical procedures in effect for such cases, which will result in the imposition of the appropriate disciplinary or penal measures.”

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops also weighed in after the guilty plea, emphasizing that the conference “continues to work to prevent such behaviour and to bring healing to the victims and their families.”

“We reiterate the Catholic Church’s long-standing condemnation of the possession, distribution and use of child pornographic images in all forms, and renew our resolve to do everything we can to promote the dignity and respect of the human person,” the bishops said.



Scene from the Calvin Symposium on Worship 2011, which brought together a wide audience of pastors, worship leaders and planners, artists, musicians, scholars, students, and others interested worshippers.



Showing a potential applicant the grants poster.

will create a Hispanic Music Ministry Formation Program. The program will allow musicians in the archdiocese to study Hispanic worship music and the role of the music in each liturgical season. The goal is to help the leaders select and lead music that is liturgically appropriate.

- ♦ A theological school in British Columbia that will use its grant to equip pastors and worship leaders in the free church tradition to recover the observance of the Church Year. They will do this through a series of workshops and seminars to shape the worship life and spiritual formation of adults and children.
- ♦ A Lutheran university in Edmonton that will equip church musicians and worship leaders in a geographical area where church leaders often feel isolated by offering training and discussion, book study groups sharing their learning throughout the year and a final gathering to celebrate what has been learned.

The Worship Renewal Grants Program is supported by the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc. Founded in 1937, Lilly’s major areas of concern are community development, education and religion. A complete list of grant recipients and project summaries, and information about next year’s application process, can be found at worship.calvin.edu. Next year’s deadline is Jan. 10, 2012.

News

Dordt College president to retire

SIOUX CENTER, Iowa (CRCNA) – Dordt College President Dr. Carl E. Zylstra announced in a recent college board of trustees meeting that he will step down in May 2012. Zylstra is the college's third president and has served in that position since 1996.

Zylstra said of his decision, "Even after we leave, our hearts will remain with Dordt College and the extraordinary mission that God has given this place."

Dordt board president Randy Kroll shared the board's appreciation for the work Zylstra has done during his decade and a half tenure. "We are very appreciative of Dr. Zylstra's leadership over the last 15 years, and we praise God for the blessings that Dordt has received through him. I look forward to seeing what God puts before him in the future."

Before his appointment as Dordt's president Zylstra served as pastor of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Orange City, Iowa. He has also been chair of a handful of academic organizations: the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, Iowa Campus Compact, the Iowa Association of College Presidents, the Iowa Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, and the Tax Advisory Committee of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

Zylstra has also served as Secretary of the Iowa College Foundation and as a member of the board of directors of the National Association Independent Colleges and Universities, Iowans for a Better Future, and the Barnabas Foundation.



Britain: Plans dropped to lift ban on Catholic monarch

LONDON (CTI) – Plans to lift the three century long ban on a Roman Catholic monarch in Britain have been dropped. The Church of England (CoE) opposed the plan. The CoE is still Britain's state church and the British monarch is its titular head, though less than three percent of the population regularly attend that church.

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg had been considering changes to the Act of Settlement, but the Church of England is believed to have pointed out some "insurmountable" constitutional problems. According to reports, the CoE says the move could lead to a loss of sovereignty, with the British monarch being ultimately answerable to the Roman Catholic pope. The Vatican would also insist that a Roman Catholic monarch's children should be raised as Roman Catholics.

A spokesperson for Clegg has told journalists that the problems raised in discussions with the CoE are "complex and difficult." A church spokesperson said the monarch, as the church's "supreme governor" could not be allowed to owe a higher loyalty elsewhere. Clegg pointed out that a Roman Catholic monarch would not be able to participate in Communion within the Church of England as its supreme governor without going against Roman Catholic teaching.

The Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales is believed to be "relaxed" about the continuing existence of the Act.

The Act of Settlement 1701 was originally passed to prevent the descendants of the Roman Catholic James II from ascending the throne. James II was deposed in the 1688 "Glorious Revolution" by supporters of the Protestant William and Mary. The legislation has been the basis for the UK's constitutional monarchy ever since.

Bible beats Justin Bieber to top of Facebook charts

NEW YORK (UBS) – Figures published by www.allfacebook.com in early May revealed that more people are actively engaging with the "The Bible" than any other page on leading social media site Facebook.

Just before Easter, the world's best-selling book was making a massive impact in the digital world, and it still is. With 6.7 million "friends," the Bible's Facebook page beat other hugely popular pages, including those of sports teams like Manchester United and celebrities like Justin Bieber and Lady Gaga.

The Anglican who oversees The Bible's Facebook page, United Bible Societies' Jane Pleace, expressed her excitement at seeing the Bible's message spreading across this leading social media platform.

"As many churches grapple how to get people to read the Bible, United Bible Societies is helping nearly seven million people read the Bible daily, using the social networking site Facebook," said Pleace, the organization's Europe & Middle East fundraising coordinator.

Nearly one million of the "friends" of the Bible Facebook page get involved each week by writing comments on the page wall and re-posting Bible verses on their personal pages. With their help, United Bible Societies has shared Scripture over 239 million times on Facebook in the last month, Pleace said. "It's wonderful to see people leaving comments saying how they've been touched by a particular Bible passage we've posted on our page."

Gospel to a new generation

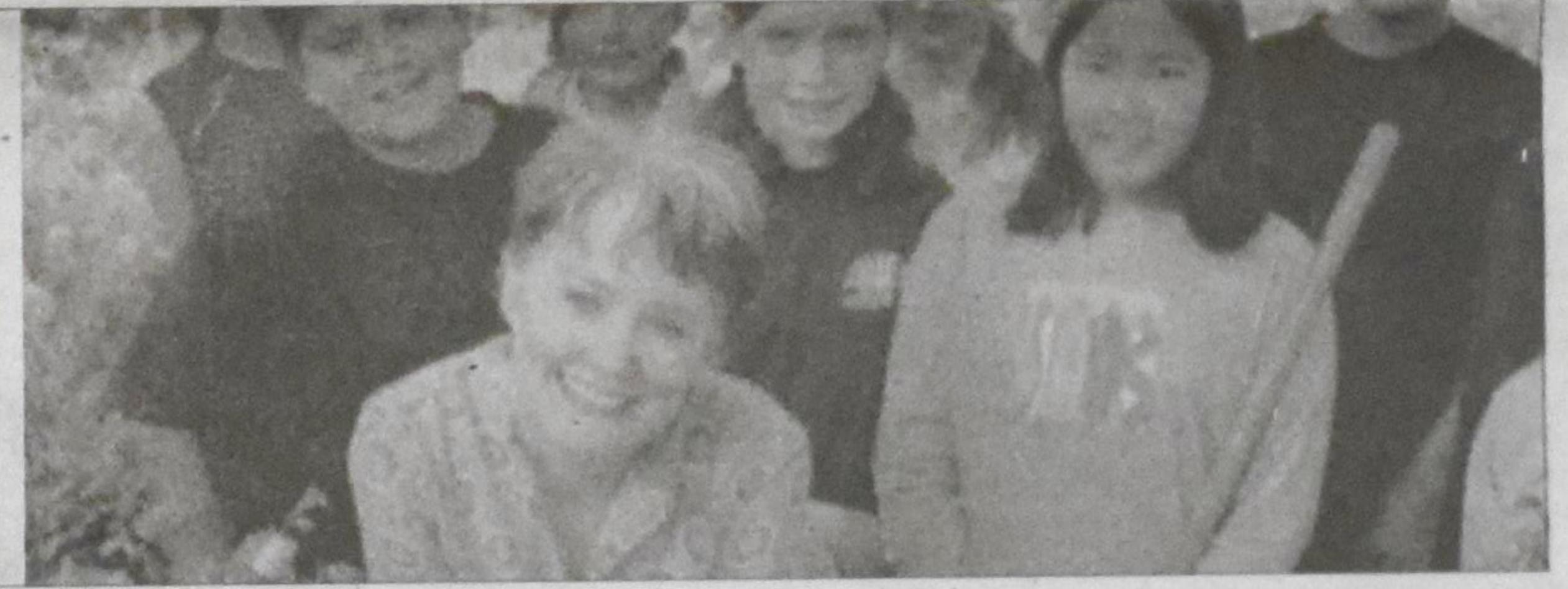
The Bible page is helping to reach a new generation, and a new generation of students, with the Gospel: 51 percent of Bible page fans are under 25 years old.

Pleace explains, "Young people come to the Bible page with questions about the Christian faith. They ask deeply thoughtful, intelligent and searching questions about the teachings in the Bible. We have the opportunity to address each question individually. We pray for these young people and we've been blessed to see some of them come to faith."

The page also attracts its fair share of atheists and Muslims. The community of volunteers who contribute to the page welcome everyone. "We love to debate with people who hold different viewpoints," says Pleace. "We try to demonstrate God's love for all people in our responses by showing a genuine interest in everyone. I'm proud of all the volunteers who respond to provoking questions with good-humour and a generous spirit. For some people, this is their only contact with Christians, so it's important they know we are a loving and accepting community."

United Bible Societies exists to provide the Bible to everyone in their chosen language. It is the collective name for the fellowship of 145 individual Bible Societies working in 200 countries and territories. Their Bible Facebook page is at facebook.com/TheBible.

Garden-kitchen-classroom jointly to provide 'edible education'



BERKELEY, Calif. (LocavoreWorldNews) – In late June, the Chez Panisse Foundation will present the third annual "Edible Schoolyard Academy" (ESY) in Berkeley, California. The subtitle of the three-day event gives a clue to what it is and will do: "Creating Garden and Kitchen Classrooms in Every Community."

The ESY Academy is designed to support emerging garden and kitchen programs nationwide, and to strengthen resource and information sharing among them. Led by Edible Schoolyard staff and guest presenters, the academy will provide a three-day immersion in "edible education."

Through hands-on activities, presentations, guided discussion and curriculum-building sessions, participants

will learn to use tools for teaching "edible education" – an integrated approach to education in the garden, kitchen and classroom.

Participants will leave the ESY Academy with garden and kitchen lessons linked to academic standards, tools for developing programs in their own communities or ways to strengthen their existing ones, and a general understanding of how the Edible Schoolyard operates on a daily basis.

The Edible Schoolyard Academy will also help create a network of people all over the world who are at different stages of developing Edible Education in their communities.



Reusable shopping bags not as 'green' as presumed

CARDIFF, Wales (NCPA) – A new study from the United Kingdom has cast doubt on the presumed environmental benefits of reusable shopping bags. The study, entitled the "Life Cycle Assessment of Supermarket Carrier Bags," was published by the U.K. Environment Agency.

The study found that the potential of reusable shopping bags to benefit the environment depends on how many times they are used before being thrown away.

Real-world data show the bags are currently harming the environment instead of helping it. "Whatever type of bag is used, the key to reducing the impacts is to reuse it as many times as possible," the study's summary states.

The four types of bags commonly used – paper, low-density polyethylene (LDPE), non-woven polypropylene and cotton – "should be reused at least three, four, 11 and 131 times respectively to ensure that they have lower global warming potential than conventional high-density polyethylene (HDPE) carrier bags that are not reused," the study concluded. Perhaps most surprising to ordinary shoppers, they must use their cloth bags 131 times to see the environmental benefits of 'reuseables' that environmentalists have touted.

Columns

From the Lab

Rudy Eikelboom



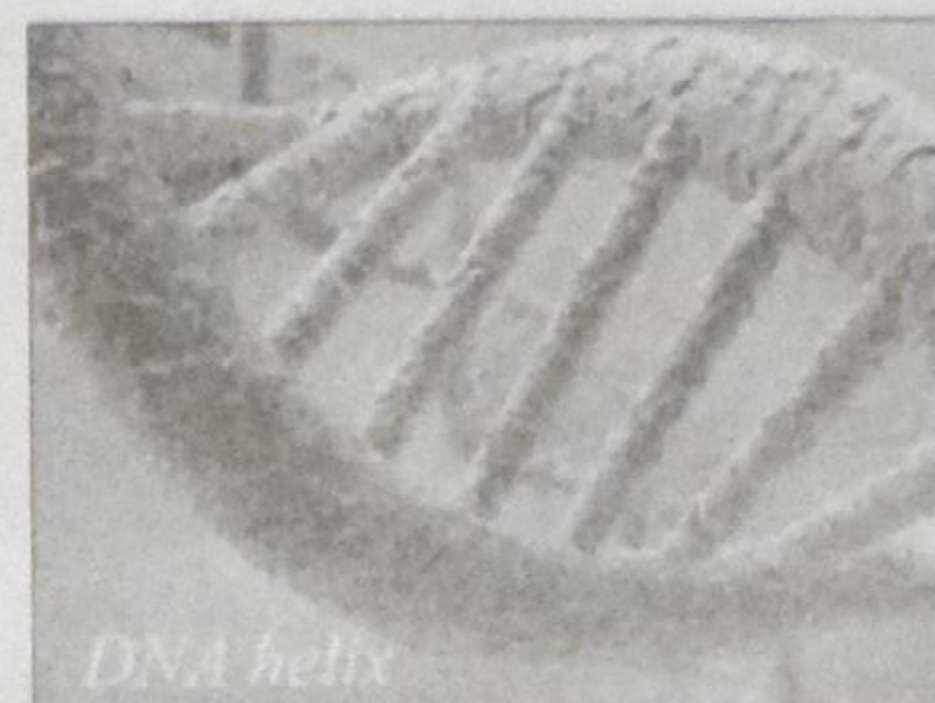
Ever since 1859, when Darwin first suggested the evolution of species as a framework for understanding the current state of life on this planet, the evidence supporting the theory of evolution has grown significantly. Darwin based his theory largely on the physical similarities among current species and the existence of linking, in between, skeletons in the fossil evidence. One criticism levelled at Darwin's evidence was the apparent lack of these in between fossils between some of the critical species. In the past 150 years, the gaps in the fossil record have slowly been filled so that today they have in many places disappeared.

The case for an evolutionary framework has been strengthened by new lines of evidence. One such line of evidence points out that the morphological (physical) similarities observed by Darwin are paralleled by genetic similarities. Dr. Dennis Venema of Trinity Western University presents a wonderful discussion of this evidence (along with his reasons why an intelligent design theory lacks plausibility) in the same issue of *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* that featured the controversial articles by Drs. Daniel Harlow and John Schneider of Calvin. (Dr. Venema's article can be found at asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/2010/PSCF9-10Venema.pdf). He points out that not only is the DNA of closely related species very similar (for example, human DNA and gorilla DNA are 95 percent the same), but also in these species the genes that create the proteins necessary for life are found in the same order on the chromosomes (think of chromosomes as very long necklaces composed of gene "beads"). Whereas multiple species might need some of the same genes and an intelligent designer might reuse genetic "beads" when creating

chromosomal "necklaces" for different species, the evolutionary process offers a simple reason for the genes to be in the same order in closely related species and have a different order in species that are less similar. Further, the random mutations found in various species' DNA can be used to map how recently species differentiated and to clock the time to their common ancestor. This molecular clock fits wonderfully with the fossil evidence that has been explored since the time of Darwin. Thus two very different levels of analysis provide a similar map of the relationship between species that now exist on the earth.

Further links

A different line of evidence, but one narrating a similar story, is found in the picture emerging from comparative psychology based on the brains and behaviours of various species. To focus on the most interesting case: whereas there clearly are differences between humans and the great ape family, great apes possess many of the cognitive building blocks that make us human. For example, both humans and apes demonstrate a clear sense of self. When we say, "I will buy groceries today," we know who will be taking a trip to Superstore. When we look in the mirror, we recognize ourselves. Great apes do too, unlike dogs (who show no sign of self recognition when looking into a mirror) and birds (a lonely budgie is happy with the second budgie he



sees in a mirror). Chimps use reflective surfaces to see things on their bodies that they cannot see directly. So if you give a female chimp a hat to put on, she will immediately go to the mirror to check herself out. Or here's a second example of cognitive similarities: if a chimp is cheated out of an expected reward – say, he expects to be given a raisin but the

raisin is secretly replaced by a piece of lettuce (which is normally a perfectly acceptable reward for which chimps will work hard) – he will throw a temper tantrum, just like a young child.

This convergence of multiple lines of evidence makes the evolutionary framework as solid in the life sciences as the atomic theory is in physics. It is certainly legitimate, when a conflict emerges between science and theology, to suggest waiting if the evidence is not yet well established. With the evolutionary framework, these days of waiting are past. Does it mean we will have to change our theology and our understanding of Scripture? Certainly. Does it undercut my faith that the Word has become flesh and dwelt among us and that he died so that we can be reunited with God? NOT AT ALL.

When Rudy Eikelboom (reikelboom@wlu.ca) is not working at Wilfrid Laurier University as the Chair of the Psychology Department, he likes to check how his hats look in front of the mirror.

Flowers and Thistles

Curt Gesch



Did you ever see a photo of an old man with a very long fishing pole (not a fishing rod, a pole – no reel or fancy eyes) standing on a bridge or the cement embankment along the Seine River in Paris? It appears that no one ever catches a fish, unless it is a sardine-sized thing that Canadians would consider too small for muskie bait. The old men are consoled only by a baguette and a bottle of wine, it seems.

Now imagine a different scene from the River Seine. In 2011, a fisherman arrives by motorboat and fishes with all the gear one could want and picks up good-sized walleyes. Same river; different times.

When Rome was a small city, children were always fishing in the Tiber. After the installation of a series of drains and sewers (the biggest named the Cloaca Maxima – big anus, you might say) things changed rapidly. I don't know how things are today, but a century or two of sewage will take its toll. One writer commented that the only thing that swims in the Tiber is eels. Not so. I found a photo essay by Melissa Brown that showed a school of large fish in the Tiber. They were carp and their mouths were above water, gasping for air, but still fish. Melissa also took a photo with this caption: "We passed a large overflow drain pouring foamy water into the river. It smelled a little like a sewer." A twentieth-century *cloaca*, you might say.

Where to lose the blues

Chicago may have been Sinatra's kind of town, but for about 100 years it was relegated to being a canal, a sewage

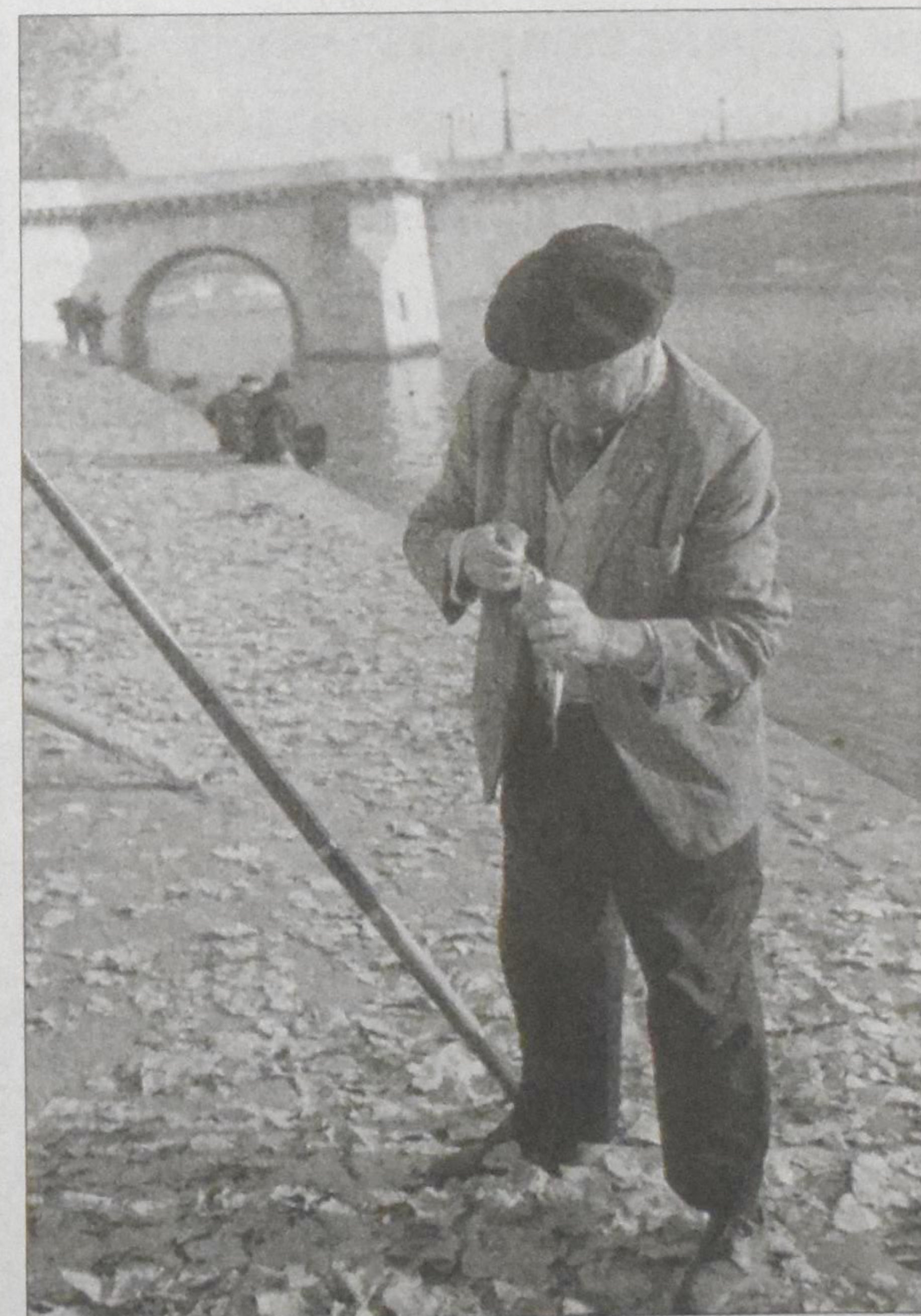
Being aware of water

disposal area and a storm water run-off channel. Things change, however, and on June 7, 2010, Don Dziedzina reported that he catches many fish in the Chicago River, right there in the middle of the city: "largemouth, smallmouth and rock bass in the river as well as crappie, bluegill, catfish and carp. I've heard reports of northern pike being caught there, too." You can also take an evening cruise down the Chicago River, enjoying the play of reflected city buildings, fine food and music. Something has happened.

One of the things that happened is that during the past half-century, environmental legislation has been passed and – when not resisted by entrenched interests – implemented. Some political leaders act as if environmental legislation is somehow opposed to the spirit of free enterprise. This puzzles me. Why would G.W. Bush, for example, speak out against regulation when everyone knows how much he loves his ranch, its wildlife, its water, soil and air? Why would people who love hunting, hiking, horseback riding, fishing and boating oppose stricter legislation of the oil sands industry in Alberta? After all, water (and air) are the stuff of our human bodies. "The environment" is no further away than the functioning of our cells, our breath, our flesh.

I would love to see that old Parisian man hook into a huge walleye; I hope the harried Chicago business executives learn to take time to appreciate bass in the shadow of downtown bridges. I am happy whenever I see people experiencing water as a place of health and peace.

I wish my readers joy, and challenge you to affirm Christ's work in defeating evil powers and principalities by husbanding, among many other things, the water which is



significant enough in God's sight that it is used to symbolize regeneration.

Curt Gesch is a farmer from British Columbia. He began calving on April 26 and finished the same day.

Reviews

People of faith along the tenth parallel

The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line Between Christianity and Islam
by Eliza Griswold. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010.

Reviewed by Adele Konyndyk

For seven years award-winning poet and journalist, Eliza Griswold, traversed the regions along the equatorial latitude line of the tenth parallel to countries in Asia and Africa where Muslims and Christians have lived and clashed for 200 years. The resulting book – *The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line Between Christianity and Islam*, is no theoretical or ideological study of two long-embattled religions. Instead, it is a journey into the very people “whose religious beliefs pattern their daily perseverance.” (12) You see the sweat on their cheeks, the scars on their limbs, and feel the earth on which they kneel in prayer. This is not mere education; this is encounter.

Griswold is quick to set out the “secular” factors (such as geography, economy, political elections) entangled in Muslim-Christian relationships in Sudan, Nigeria, Indonesia, Somalia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Some factors are well known, such as oil’s relationship to Sudan’s unrest. Others, however, may be less well-known, such the correlation between the price of chocolate and violent uprisings in Indonesia. Even climate change can be a kind of trigger, forcing believers to migrate from a dry region to another region where they are a minority. Griswold’s considerations of these factors prove she is not out to draft an oversimplified and generalized solution to Muslim-Christian conflicts. Her writing is more exploratory (perhaps even diagnostic) surgery rather than a search for a singular cause (or cure.)



Violence erupted between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria's Kaduna state following the country's recent presidential election.

Although followers of both faiths refer to these earthly factors, the most stimulating and dramatic conversations recorded in the book explore the eternal thrust of these religions. Griswold’s ability to instigate and guide such discussions is a true mark of her investigative tenacity. With respect and candor, she probes the intersection between everyday faith and the afterlife with believers from all walks of faith and life – from young Muslims, to Christian militia members, to imprisoned Sunday school teachers and the President of Sudan. Predictably, some of the most alarming conversations are those in which fundamentalist Muslims talk of forcible conversion or aggression against unbelievers as a kind of “escalator to

heaven” (245). She does meet with moderate Muslims who speak out against killing Christians, but they still talk of domination over Christians and give off the sense that, “the fight against Christians was eternal, and everywhere” (207).

Yet Griswold’s impressions of Christians are also upsetting. She in no way equates mission strategies of “winning souls” with the hostile tactics employed by jihadist Muslims to dominate or persecute unbelievers. Even the most fundamentalist Christians she meets present conversion to Christianity as a choice, and her certainty of that is clear, as is her relief for it. But there is truth to her observation that for both Christians and Muslims, religion can seem merely “a means to safeguard individual and collective security in this world and the next one.” (11)

Parallel works best as a journey into the hearts and minds of various people because it allows us to encounter Griswold herself without undermining the balance and objectivity of her acute observational eye. Her impression of religious submission, for example, is obviously framed by her own background as the daughter of an Anglican priest. When she recalls her father having to lie on the floor in the shape of a cross, as part of his consecration ceremony, she describes this as “an act of utter surrender that terrified and angered [her].” (117) The memory resurfaces in a warm but wary observation of Franklin Graham, with whom she traveled Sudan. “Offering us a chance at salvation was the most loving thing he could do for us,” she says. “Yet his work was not really about us, not us as people; it was about fulfilling his own duty to God. In this he resembled my father spread-eagled on the cathedral floor, a man who sought to give himself over to a greater power.” (120)

Griswold’s experiences along the tenth parallel perhaps leave her unable to provide conclusive solutions to the “clash of civilizations” issues that so often cloud the discussions of Christian/Muslim relations. There is bravery, though, in her openly baffled admission that believers of both faiths “[slipped] out of [her] easy distinctions.” (282) Her flair for sensory detail and mind for historical context give her notes-from-the-field approach depth and freshness of insight. These insights can be jumping off points for further discussion of one of the most important issues of our age, and access points into the actual fields, villages, and street corners embroiled by wars in the name of religion.

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"I've lived enough to know, I am complicit in the evil that, alas, prevails over the world and the evil that will smite me blindly" - Brother Christian.

Monastics in the midst of conflict

Of Gods and Men, Armada Films, 2010.

Reviewed by Mary VanderVennen

There is much talk among Christians about how to witness to Muslims. *Of Gods and Men* is a beautifully written and produced movie of a true story of how some Christians chose to live their witness.

The events in the movie take place in Algeria following the French-Algerian war of the 1950s, a particularly vicious conflict in which Algeria claimed independence from France but in the process also suffered from a civil war among rival factions.

A group of eight French monks chose to settle in a Muslim Algerian village. The head of the monastery, Brother Christian, was a highly educated member of an elite family in France. He had actually been a French soldier in the war. He chose, along with seven Cistercian brothers, to come back to work for peace. The monks settled into a monastery in the village and celebrated their daily canonical hours and offices. They raised crops, produced honey, and sold their produce in the village market. Brother Luc, a physician, treated the villagers without charge. They celebrated the villagers’ birthdays and other events along with them. Eventually they were welcomed and integrated into the daily life of the community. They lived together for years, respectfully and peacefully.

Then the Islamic extremists came. They murdered a group of foreigners, Croatian construction workers, and then came after the monks. There is a powerful scene of a non-violent confrontation between the monks and the extremists which occurred on Christmas Eve. The leader of the extremists eventually withdrew when Brother Christian quoted from the Koran and told him it was Issa’s birthday. The leader was later murdered by his group for being too easy on the monks. The monks do their individual and communal soul-searching as to whether to stay or return home to France. They are offered the dubious protection of the army, which they refuse. The authorities ask them to leave, blaming the unrest on France’s colonial policies in Algeria. Eventually they together reach the decision to stay, partly because France is no longer “home” to them, and partly because they

feel responsibility to their calling and to their love for the villagers who are also at risk and who beg them to stay. But inevitably the extremists return, rob the monastery and seize the monks as hostages, all except two who managed to escape.

This is a movie that should be seen by all Christians – and Muslims. The pace is slow, allowing you to feel the daily rhythm of a monastery and of simple village life. The monks’ worship, and especially their singing, is austere but profoundly moving. There is a powerful scene in which the monks are singing at worship while a helicopter hangs ominously overhead. The buildup of tension is balanced by very human interactions with the people of the village. The movie has won many awards at film festivals including Cannes and Toronto’s international film festival. It is wonderful to see religion and the practice of faith depicted so respectfully in a “secular” film.

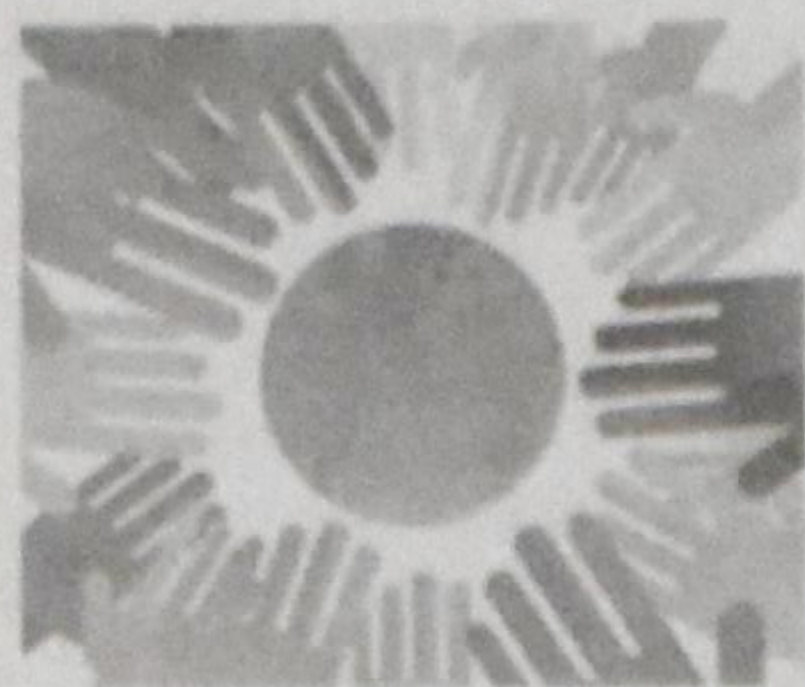
For Christians it also raises the question of what constitutes effective witness. Is verbal communication of the gospel the best way? The only way? Or does the non-violent presence such as that of the monks practiced offer an alternative? Is this kind of witness possible in North America? After all, we have Christian extremists such as the pastor in Florida who burned a copy of the Koran. And if we were faced with the alternatives the monks (as well as the Muslim villagers) faced – leave or live with the constant threat of death – which would we choose, and how would we make the choice? The film is not only a beautiful depiction of spirituality, but is also powerfully evocative in the questions it pushes viewers to consider.

See this movie if you can. Better yet, get the DVD and invite your friends to see it with you.

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Features



Where did the Belhar Confession come from?

Michael R. Wagenman

Numerous voices have been circulating through the Reformed community lately about the Belhar Confession. The loudest voices I hear seem to be fueled by deep anxieties about the wolves cloaked in the Belhar's soft sheepskin themes. Is the Belhar just a Trojan Horse tactic by liberals in the church? Or, is the Belhar just what we need to challenge our deeply held ethnocentric understandings of the world? The Belhar is uncomfortable to us because it says that the story of injustice isn't just a South African story. It's the story of every sinful human heart.

The story of injustice

When European settlers descended on South Africa, they believed they had found a land waiting for civilization. As white communities grew, white settlers had to figure out how they would construct a society in the midst of the indigenous black populations with the further complicating factor of the mixed-race/Indian "coloured" populations.

Whether it was the prevailing understanding of the time or a deep-seated sense of cultural or ethnic superiority, the minority whites couldn't bring themselves to participate as equals in society with the majority blacks, particularly in the church. And so, in 1881, rather than the white Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa welcoming black South Africans as equal brothers and sisters in Christ according to Paul's instructions about race in the New Testament, a separate denomination was started for them, the Dutch Reformed *Mission Church*.

As history rolled on, the conviction that whites could not live together equally with blacks and "coloured" slowly grew into a theology of separateness. No longer were feelings of unease amid differences just that: feelings. The discomfort became theologically supported under a doctrine of separation. God had ordained the various ethnic communities to hold certain places in society: the whites in the "master" role and the blacks in the "servant" role. It wasn't just that people were different. God had purposely created the differences and had arranged them in a social hierarchy that favoured some against others.

This was the theological basis upon which slavery was introduced in South Africa in 1652, upon which missions

to the indigenous South Africans proceeded, and upon which whites and blacks could not celebrate the Lord's Supper together in the 18th and 19th centuries. This was also the theological basis upon which the atrocity known as apartheid came to dominate South Africa. Not only was this separateness justified theologically within the church and in relationships between individuals (master vs. servant), but, throughout the 19th century, became codified politically and legally and enforced with the power of the state.

Apartheid was no longer about discomfort. It was about maintaining power. While not every white settler in South Africa was racist to the core, the very fabric of their society became steeped in a theologically-, politically-, and legally-enforced injustice.

Rumblings reach North America

By the mid-20th century, we began to hear about apartheid in South Africa and to be concerned. In 1959, the Synod of the CRCNA took note of "the racial tensions and flagrant violation of the scriptural principle of equality occurring in society and in the church both in America and in our world." This wasn't just apartheid in South Africa. This was also the civil rights movement in the US.

When the Belhar Confession was drafted in Cape Town, South Africa, between 1978 and 1982, it drew the attention of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches who condemned the theological basis and actual practice of apartheid in South Africa as heresy. Now North American Reformed denominations were involved.

Throughout the late 20th century, the CRCNA would go on record saying that "the [Belhar] confession... can only be judged to be in essential accord with the declarations on race issued by the [Reformed Ecumenical Council] and by synods of the CRC." "As for [the Belhar Confession], it is our judgment that [it]...is in accord with the decisions of several synods of the CRC." The Synod of the CRCNA even endorsed "the InterChurch Relations Committee's evaluation which judges that the Belhar Confession is in harmony with the 'Reformed faith as a body of truth' articulated in the historic Reformed confessions and is in basic agreement with the Reformed Ecumenical Council's and CRC's decisions on race made over the past decades."

When the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa (the black/ "coloured church") asked the Reformed churches of the world to stand in solidarity with them against injustice by adopting the Belhar as one of their confessions, the Belhar got placed on our agendas.

A gift hard to accept

So, for the first time in church history, the global south brought its scriptural insight as a gift to the global north in the form of the Belhar Confession. And yet this gift has sparked a lively, widespread, and even heated discussion. Why? Why would a gracious gift from the victims of apartheid in South Africa - a gift that they

themselves found so healing and restorative - be the very thing that sparks renewed tensions in North America? I tend to think the North American reaction to the Belhar isn't really about the Belhar. Rather, the Belhar highlights the unfinished business we have neglected in the North American church.

The Belhar is uncomfortable for us because it reminds us that North Americans are not immune to abuses of power and racism. In fact, the Belhar is a prophetic finger pointing out to us that injustice and racism are not problems rooted only in the ignorance of the past, but are living realities in our lives and institutions today.

We in North America have become theologically soft. The Belhar reminds us that to be Reformed is to be confessional - and to be confessional is to stand in a theological tradition. We have largely forgotten our theological tradition and we aren't used to wrestling through issues theologically and biblically as we once were accustomed to.

The Belhar is uncomfortable also because it highlights our own national failures in colonizing North America. Whether it is African-American slavery, or white brutality during the civil rights movement of the mid-20th century, the current bitter immigration debates in the United States or the historic and ongoing injustices heaped on Canada's First Nations communities, the Belhar confirms for us some of our worst fears as North Americans: we are as complicit in injustice as white South Africans.

Where should we begin?

We often overlook the first step in responding to the Belhar. Too often, we begin by anxiously blaming the messenger rather than prayerfully listening to the hard message. This conveniently sidelines the necessity of listening to the teaching of Scripture found in the Belhar. It's easier for us to focus on the institutional questions or the unknown consequences of the Belhar than it is to lay our lives - individually and communally - before Scripture and its truths crystallized in the Belhar and allow the risen Christ to re-shape our fallen nature, stereotypes, prejudices and allegiances.

The first step is not to speak - it's to listen: listen to the living God in Scripture and to his message embodied in the Belhar. Once we have listened to the Belhar, in our own cultural contexts here in North America, then we may be ready to think about other questions like its adoption as a Confession or how it might address the thorny question of homosexuality. But as of today, I don't think we've done enough listening - to Scripture or the Belhar. We're too busy fretting about what perils will befall us if we get too close to the Belhar. We may be in danger of missing an opportunity for greater conformity to the Gospel and greater solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ from other parts of God's beautiful but broken world. Let's be willing to listen. ✕

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Jan van Riebeeck arrives in Table Bay in April 1652, Charles Davidson Bell, 1813-1882.

Is the Belhar Confession catholic?

David van der Woerd

To understand the Belhar Confession, it is necessary to know its background. From 1948-1994, South Africa was under the grip of apartheid. Sadly, the Christian church, and specifically, the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, was instrumental in establishing and maintaining that policy.



Dr. Allan Boesak

Eventually "the contradictions between Jesus' teachings of love and the oppressive system of apartheid soon became unbearable" reported Dr. Allan Boesak, a prominent South African theologian who firmly opposed apartheid. As a result, he and others originated the Belhar Confession to convey that the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa, the successor to the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, forthwith desired "to

uphold the gospel while responding to heresy [because] the bondage of slavery and the bonds of Christian love could not live side by side." The Belhar, Boesak asserts, "gives voice to the voiceless...it wasn't born in the steeples of white power, but with the socially disdained. It is not a product of esoteric academic debate but instead speaks with the eloquence of the faithful."

Against the backdrop of apartheid, the Belhar appears to be sound. Nevertheless, a closer review reveals "loose" construction which is open to unexpected interpretations. For example, while our own local church was studying the document, we were simultaneously renting part of our facilities to a group of Italian believers who wanted a place to worship together. The Belhar condemns as sin any policy which promotes racial separation. One of our members humbly asked if we were therefore, according to the Belhar, sinning.

Ambiguous potential

The Presbytery of Sacramento has called the Belhar "a complex and somewhat confusing document, which some parties – theologians as well as the ordained and laity – have attempted to use to press issues other than racial equality." Interestingly, the bellwether of the ambiguity of the Belhar may have been sounded by one of its own initiators: Dr. Boesak. The Belhar espouses inclusivity and some argue, including Dr. Boesak, that it opens the door to gay and lesbian ordination. Susan Cyre wrote in *Theology Matters*, Sept/Oct 2010, that the Belhar Confession is not limited to the sin of racism. She reports that Dr. Boesak told members of his Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa in 2008 that the Belhar should also be used to end discrimination against those who practice same-sex behaviour. Boesak claimed, "Based on the Belhar, the church should fully accept gay members, should perform gay marriage ceremonies and allow ministers in gay relationships to serve in the church...the demand for inclusivity goes well beyond the issue of race" to include "women, people with disabilities and those whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual." Although Boesak's own church rejected this particular interpretation of the Belhar, the fact that he would see its potential for this purpose demonstrates that Belhar can be used in this expansive way.

Dr. Richard J. Mouw wrote on his

blog, "Boesak was...instrumental in drafting the 1986 Belhar Confession, which I welcomed at the time as an important confessional statement about race relationships. He now appeals to that document in support of his advocacy for gay-lesbian ordination. In a recent insightful blog posting, *The Belhar Confession & God's Final Revelation*, Violet Larson argues that this is a good reason to question the theological adequacy of the Belhar Confession, precisely because of the use to which it is being put these days by proponents of full inclusion on same-sex topics. I agree with her. While that document spoke forthrightly against the injustices of apartheid, it did not explicitly appeal to biblical authority. That it can now be seen by some of its drafters as capable of being extended to the full inclusion of active gays and lesbians in ministry says something about the weaknesses of Belhar – not as an important prophetic declaration in its original context, but as a statement that can stand on its own as a normative confession."

I wonder if the Reformed churches' adoption of the Belhar worldwide might not result in our own version of recent Catholic Church history. There is a lawyer's adage that says "Bad facts make bad law" which stands for the premise that precedent-setting law that arises in response to horrific fact situations is often problematic when applied to a general societal context. It may have been appropriate at the time to achieve a just result in a particularly offensive circumstance which by its nature required an unequivocal response, but when that law is subsequently given a more general application it proves ineffective. In short, the law which may have dealt with a particular crisis appropriately is not so useful when applied more generally.

Bad facts make bad law

For example, think of the Catholic Church abuse cases at the Mount Cashel Orphanage in Newfoundland and the subsequent legal fallout. The facts of the abuse cases were offensive to all and cried out for a response. The orphanage was operated by the Christian Brothers of Ireland in Canada. Since 1949, "wards of the state" had been placed there by the provincial government, but in 1989 one of Canada's largest sexual abuse scandals was uncovered when it was revealed that the staff of the orphanage had perpetrated an extensive pattern of sexual and physical abuse on the orphanage's residents. This resulted in government commissions, criminal prosecutions and extensive civil litigation. Millions of dollars in financial settlements were ordered. However, the amounts raised from the court-ordered liquidation of the orphanage property covered only a fraction of the victims' damage awards. So the court, fueled by outrage, reached

Mount Cashel Orphanage, Newfoundland.



across the country to British Columbia and liquidated the property of an unrelated orphanage which also happened to be operated by the Christian Brothers. In so doing, the court trampled over centuries-old trust law in ways previously unimagined.

Aside from those in British Columbia who lost their orphanage, no one flagged the injustice because the Newfoundland victims were being compensated. But in the process of meting out justice, two new classes of victims were created. The first was the innocent BC orphanage school and all its beneficiaries and participants. The second was the Canadian charitable sector at large, which had the foundation of its legal principles rocked and now continues to suffer from the instability of the aftershocks which have created an "open season" environment for future potential tort claimants against them in an increasingly litigious society. Bad facts made bad law.

RCA author and pastor Kevin DeYoung writes, "I am concerned about what it will mean for the Reformed Church to confess the Belhar Confession together. I understand that possible abuses of a confession should not be a knock against a confession itself, but as many RCA voices have pointed out, adopting the Belhar Confession only makes sense if we are truly going to confess it together. Thus, it becomes important to listen to how others are already confessing Belhar. Those advocating the adoption of Belhar do not simply want us to affirm an anti-apartheid document. They are passionate about Belhar because of its many implications...Belhar has already been used in support for the full inclusion of homosexuals into the life of the church...I am not opposed in principle to a new confession. But a new confession should clarify some issue that is begging for clarification. While we certainly have a ways to go to overcome racial tensions in this country, I don't see where we are facing anything remotely close to the situation that prompted Belhar in South Africa in the 1980s. We do not honour the anti-apartheid cause by equating our situation to theirs. Belhar served a clear purpose in South Africa. In our context it muddies the waters."

The Belhar Confession: perhaps not for all times and places

Perhaps the fundamental problem with the Belhar is that it was made to oppose something. This weakness allows derivative principles and extrapolations to come into play. To become its fourth confession, the CRC will, among other things, have to satisfy itself that the Belhar is "catholic," meaning that it is universal and true for all times and all places. The Belhar certainly was an effective response and indication of repentance by the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa for its participation in apartheid and for that it is to be lauded. But the Belhar was created to respond to an extreme societal context; to confront the sin of racism perpetrated by the church and the state of that country. When the Belhar is applied beyond that context, it appears to fall down. Its loose construction leaves too much room open for unforeseen interpretations. Indeed, could there be a more glaring example of this than its interpretation by one of its own, Dr. Boesak? If that is not a warning sign of its potential flaws, what is? My advice: handle with care.

David van der Woerd is a Partner at Ross & McBride LLP, practicing in the Business Law Group. Currently, he is also the treasurer of the Hamilton Children's Aid Society and is Vice-chair and treasurer of Mission Services of Hamilton.



Features

Canadian anthropologist asks: 'What did Jesus sing?'

Jewish refugee from the Nazis gives a fascinating answer

Marian Van Til

OTTAWA—The Gospel of Matthew says that as the Last Supper ended, Jesus and the Twelve sang a hymn, then went to the Mount of Olives. Clearly that hymn wasn't what we would think of as a hymn. So what did it sound like and where did the text come from? "What did Jesus sing?" wonders anthropologist Geoffrey Clarfield.

Writing in the *National Post*, Clarfield explored the relationship between the synagogue music of Jesus' time and Gregorian chant, the worship music of the pre-Reformation church. There's a connection between the music Jesus sang and the chant of the early Christian church? Well, yes, as unlikely as that may seem at first glance. Clarfield calls attention to a recording called *The Sacred Bridge*, a CD featuring Psalm 114. Its music "oscillates between Latin and Hebrew, Gregorian chant and synagogue cantillation [ritual chanting of passages from the Old Testament]," he writes.

Since the Psalms comprised the Jewish "hymnbook" of the time, some scholars surmise that what Jesus sang might have been from Psalms 113 to 118. That notion is based on another one: that at the Passover in the upper room Jesus and his disciples "most likely recounted, in story and song, the exodus of the Jewish people from their bondage in Egypt over a thousand years earlier," says Clarfield.

But Clarfield thinks the important question is "whether what Jesus sang influenced the future liturgical music of the Catholic Church," i.e., Gregorian chant – called so because it was codified by Pope Gregory. "For 2,000 years, we didn't know the answers. But during the last century modern musicology and ethnomusicology have given us some inkling of what Jesus sang and what came of it," says Clarfield.

Clarfield reminded *National Post* readers that the ancient eastern Mediterranean region had many kinds of folk music: "for births, weddings, funerals and various celebrations throughout the life cycle" – as all human cultures did, and do. We don't have any of these specific melodies, but musicologists now think that "the music of those ancient times may have resembled ... much of the folk music of the Jews, Samaritans, Armenians, Arabs and other inhabitants of the Holy Land during the Ottoman Empire and before – music of which we have recordings that are over 100 years old. These may represent the last gasp of a musical oral tradition that began centuries before the rise of Islam," Clarfield writes.

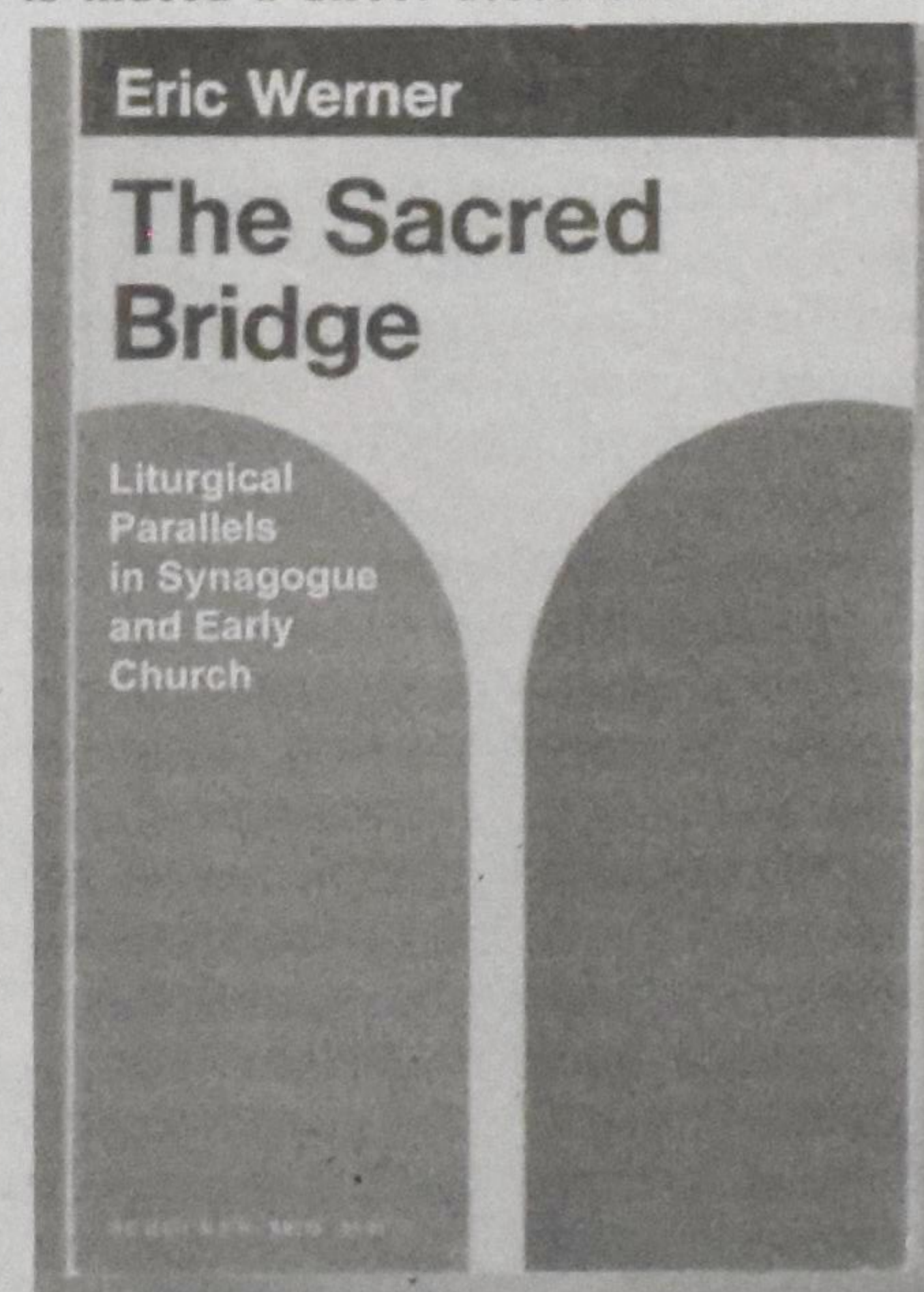
There is an oral tradition of synagogue chanting that has survived among Jews for two millennia and still exists. The Jews of the Diaspora in Spain, Eastern Europe, Iraq, Persia, Yemen and Uzbekistan developed their own styles. "One would think that after 2,000 years there would be no more 'family resemblance' of a musical nature among these traditions. But there is," Clarfield says.

Uncanny musical similarity despite dispersion

As the 20th century dawned, Jews living throughout the Islamic and Western world began migrating back to Israel. (Israel became a mandated protectorate of Great Britain after the World War I.) On that hangs a fascinating story.

A European-born Jewish musicologist named Idelsohn spent his life recording and comparing all the chants he heard of those Jews newly gathered in their ancestral home. In comparing the chants, Idelsohn found that despite the former geographical and historical isolation of the "Diaspora" communities, much of their traditional repertoires had melodies that were similar to each other (based on the same melodic kernels or "motives") – especially the chants used to sing the Psalms. The story gets even more interesting. In 1938, a young Jew named Eric Werner fled to New York to escape the Nazis. In Europe he had already built a reputation as a musician, composer and fine musicologist. Having settled in New York, he continued his musicological work by asking himself what Clarfield calls "a most counter-intuitive question." *Was Gregorian chant based on the chant of the Jewish synagogue?* In 1959, after more than 10 years of wrestling with that question, Werner published a study on the possible relationship between the two which he called *The Sacred Bridge*.

Werner posited that Gregorian chant is indeed a direct descendant of Jewish



synagogue music. Admittedly, he "never discovered a definitive medieval or early Christian text that bluntly announced that Christian cantillation was based on Jewish cantillation, but that is not how new religions develop," notes Clarfield. "They adopt and adapt, and the evidence for adoption is circumstantial and comparative."

Werner published a second edition of *The Sacred Bridge* in 1974 with additional data. It has had both supporters and detractors. One of the earlier critics, chant expert Peter

Jeffery, insisted that Werner "stretched the evidence beyond reasonable expectations."

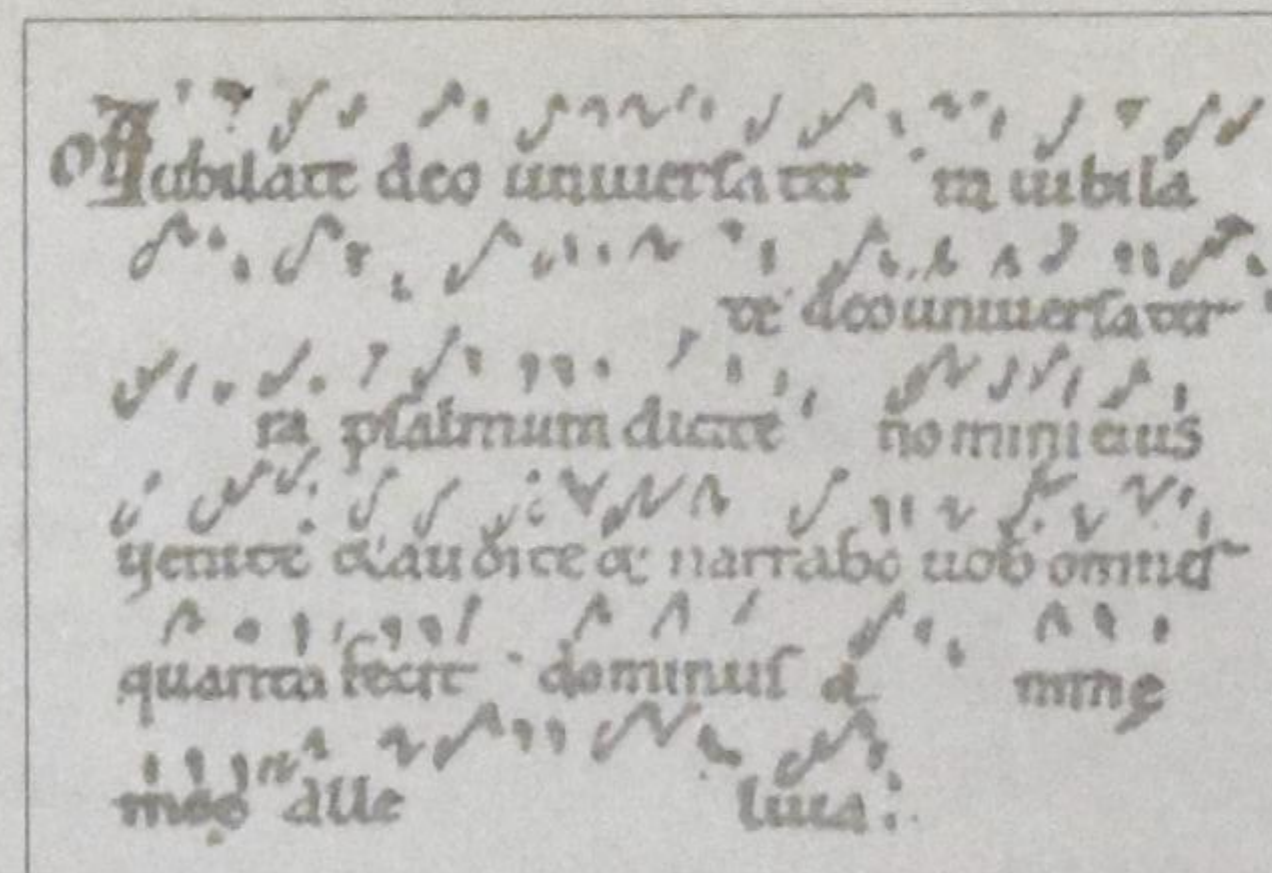
Since then, however, new arguments have gone in Werner's favour. Both the Christian church and New Testament scholars have become far more aware of Jesus' Jewishness, notes Clarfield. It is understood that the early church in Jerusalem, led by James (Jesus' brother), adhered to Jewish law and ritual. So it is highly likely that their Jewish mode of singing would have been transferred to their worship in the early church.

Logical relations

Another point in Werner's favour is "the unique nature of the Old and New Testaments and Christian ritual, which had no counterpart in Pagan Hellenism," says Clarfield.

The intoning of Jewish liturgical music is determined by the "logical relations" between its sentence structure and music. Both Jewish chant and Gregorian chant follow speech-based rising and falling patterns. They both consist of primarily syllabic patterns (one word or syllable per note), contrasted with some syllables or words being ornamented with melismas (many notes sung to that one word or syllable).

Werner observed, too, that the notation of Jewish chant and the notation of early Gre-



Gregorian chant neumes.

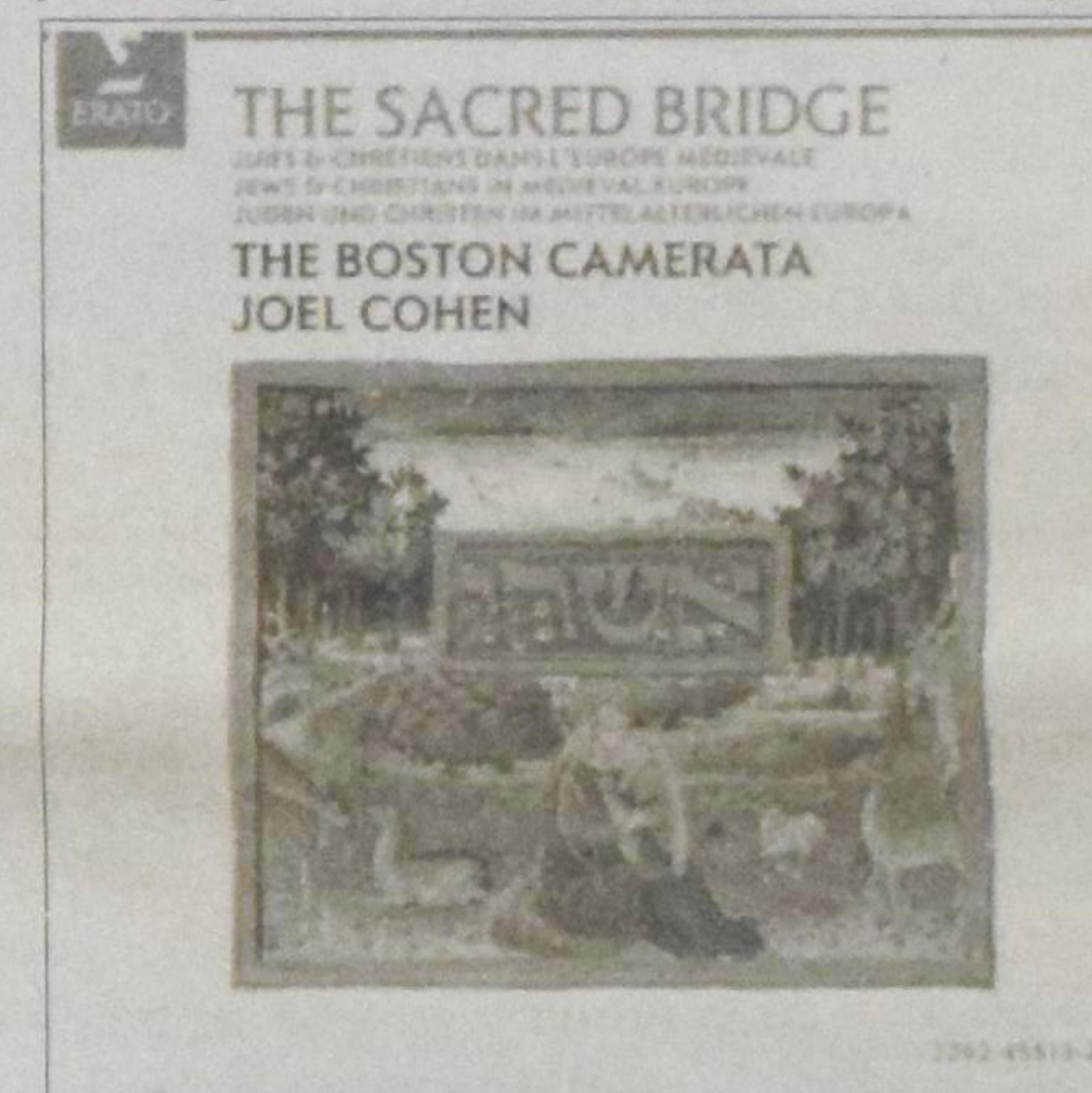
gorian chant are similar. They both utilized "neumes" before the invention of notes on a staff. Those neumes were visual signs that developed from hand gestures used when both traditions were still primarily oral (though neumes are still used in modern Jewish synagogues). In *The Sacred Bridge* "Werner provides the readers charts of almost identical pieces of Gregorian chant with synagogue melodies," says Clarfield. Clarfield noted that even though Christianity had "distanced itself from its Hebraic origins in the fourth and fifth centuries," authorities as important as Augustine "warned of deviation from the old tradition of singing in the church – implying an adherence to the musical traditions that came from Jerusalem. Despite the regional evolution of different kinds of church music, some early church fathers declared later musical innovations to be heresy." Due to the work of additional music historians, we now have a clearer understanding of the history of chant in the different Christian traditions that used it (and still use it): Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox,

Syrian, Armenian and various others. That new, broader understanding of the Christian chant traditions has not invalidated Werner's conclusions.

Hear for yourself

Clarfield reminded those who haven't studied music history or church-music history that the earliest surviving notated Gregorian chant we have comes from AD 930, not even a thousand years after Jesus and his disciples sang that hymn on the way to the Mount of Olives (possibly Hymn 114 on the CD version of *The Sacred Bridge*).

Clarfield summed up Werner's thesis as "really an argument about oral tradition and how new religions musically hived off from their parent creed." But he doesn't want you to just take his word for it. Hearing is



believing.

"The most persuasive evidence available to the listening public can be found on the CD *The Sacred Bridge*, directed by Joel Cohen of the Boston Camerata early music ensemble," notes Clarfield. (I might add that the Boston Camerata is an exceptionally fine early music ensemble. If you enjoy early music of any kind, you'll be delighted by their performances.)

Psalm 114 is the third track on the CD. Back to Clarfield's analysis: "It oscillates between Latin and Hebrew, Gregorian chant and synagogue cantillation. The melodies are identical and despite the alteration between Hebrew and Latin you would think you were listening to the same song. In fact, you probably are, for no doubt this is a distant echo of what Jesus sang."

The Sacred Bridge: Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe (CD) and *The Sacred Bridge: Liturgical Parallels in Synagogue and Early Church* (book) are available online at amazon.com.

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Columns



John, Robert and Ted Kennedy

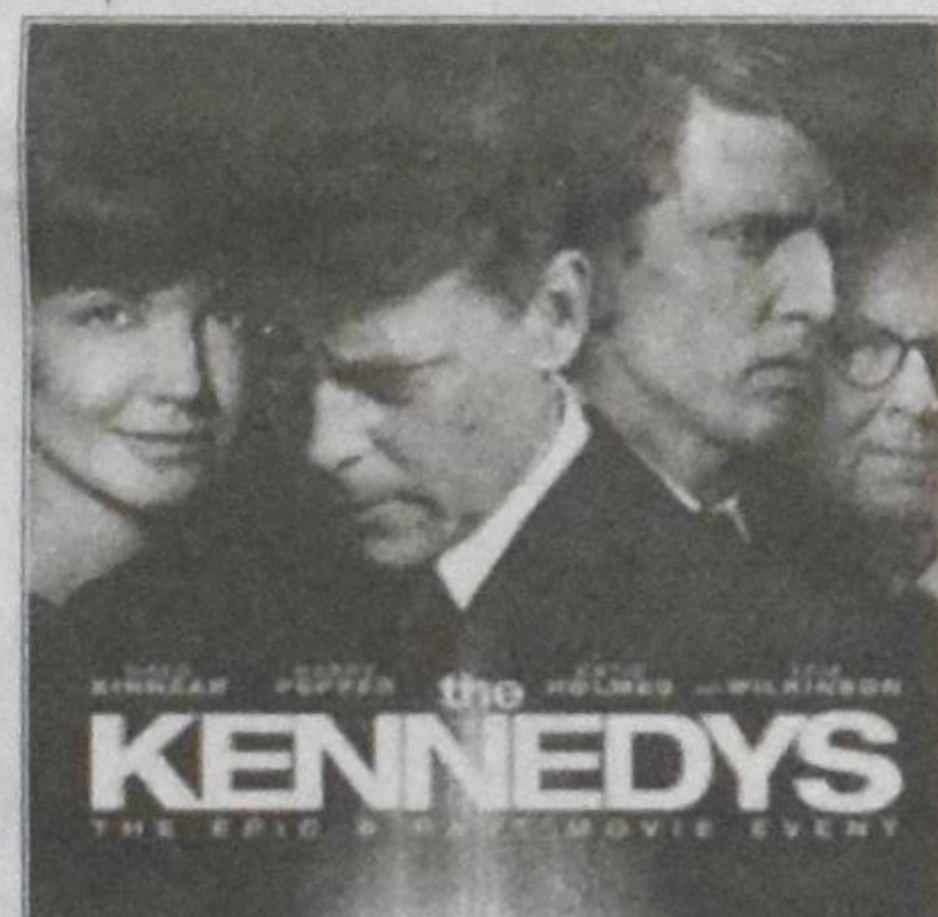
Travels in America Part I: The Kennedy legacy

many programs on the Kennedy presidency. And yes, it did play some role in my choice of career in the public service.

Spurred to excellence

Another Kennedy speech springs to mind in the context of yet another 50th anniversary celebration this spring – Yuri Gagarin's first manned space flight. The "space race" had begun a few years earlier, with the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik 1 in October 1957, the first satellite into space. At the time, the Soviet Union led the way in manned space flight as well. President Kennedy acknowledged that second place position, then picked up the challenge by announcing in September 1962 that "...we choose to go to the moon in this decade and do other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to measure and organize the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win."

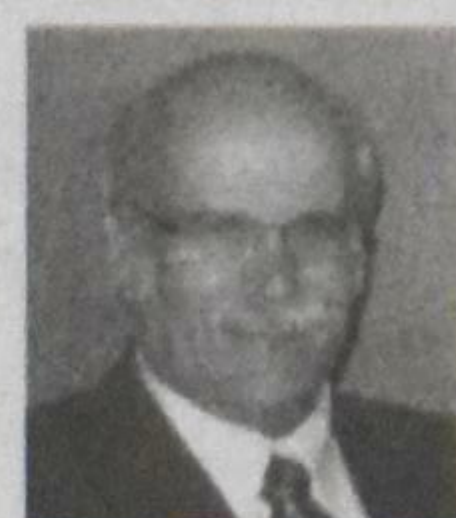
The United States did win the race to the moon. Kennedy's challenge to get there within the decade became even more paramount after his assassination. By August 1969, the United States had honoured their fallen President's vision. But having witnessed this presidential challenge and its achievement, why do we who inherited his legacy remain so timid? We have witnessed many other tremendous technological advances since;



In April, the History Channel began a controversial miniseries on the famous family.

what are we equally fervent about achieving? Are we prepared to do the unattainable – for example, conquering cancer?

And do we as Christians have some goal we are working hard to achieve? In a western world which increasingly ignores Christianity, what seemingly impossible goal could we strive to achieve to make the good news of Jesus Christ real to our neighbour? A trip to the moon is monumental. But what if we take up Kennedy's challenge by asking what we can do for our community – then think and plan at the community level. What has your church often thought it wanted to achieve but was too timid to do or too frightened of the resources it would take? Maybe we should abandon the timidity and get on with it! And where are our leaders, like Kennedy? Who will inspire us to pursue what will be hard, so that we too can organize the best of our energies? ✂



Mike Wevers is an independent consultant, retired from the Alberta Government as an Assistant Deputy Minister. He lives in Edmonton. As a public policy wonk, this winter Mike finally fulfilled his wish to visit Washington DC.

Mike Wevers

Faced with another federal election, we asked ourselves the usual questions. Who can maintain the economic stability we enjoyed while most of the world's economies were battered by recession? Which party will deliver a budget that helps those in need and improves health services while keeping taxes as low as possible? We didn't spend much time asking which leader will inspire us – who will lead us to achieve what appears to be beyond our grasp?

Before the election, my wife and I enjoyed traveling along America's east coast by train. Without planning it, we were in Washington when the city celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Inauguration of President John F. Kennedy. We were able to attend a special gala at the Kennedy Center, Washington's premiere arts facility. Much has been written about Kennedy and his few years in office, not all of it positive. Following his untimely death, he became the subject of scandal that would tarnish his name. Yet most writers have recognized his courage in battle in World War II, his powerful oratory and his response to the Cuban missile crisis, which defined his leadership. It is that which I remember best, and which was celebrated at the Kennedy Center.

I was only 10 years old when Kennedy was assassinated, yet to many of the youth of that day, his administration represented a "brief and shining moment" in world events. The gala incorporated narratives from some of Kennedy's speeches, with the January 1961 Inaugural Address as the centrepiece. (Readers can hear the speech in its entirety at JFK50.org.) Kennedy's delivery amazes with its eloquence and its spiritual fervour, a characteristic still so prevalent in U.S. politics but lacking in Canada. For example, in his preamble, Kennedy reminds us "the rights of man come not from the state, but from the hands of God." But the sterling centre of the Inaugural Address is Kennedy's challenge to his fellow Americans, that "you ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country." It's a challenge I can recall from my youth and one I heard repeated throughout the decade following in

Artful Eye



Lake Painting, Frank Sawyer

Lake Kathlyn

Just sitting by the hollow reeds
listening to the burpy frogs
and hearing a trout plop
I almost whisper:
Thoreau had his pond
and I too am fond
of this town of Smithers.

A gliding eagle retreats
past the corner of my view
as lazy cumulous clouds
hover as only clouds can do
over the trembling aspens
whose tall white trunks beneath
the azure sky clasp and fasten
branches and twigs to every leaf –
slicing the sky in segments
with their aspiring pigments.

Time stands still it seems
until soft dark shadows creep
as the moon is slowly rising –
then a loon sends a surprising
warble, an erie echo
across the lake.

This sound of sorrow
is maybe a goodbye
but only until tomorrow.

Frank Sawyer



Frank Sawyer (fsawyer777@gmail.com) was born in BC and studied at Calvin College and in the Netherlands where he became a pastor. Since 1982 he has served with Christian Reformed World Missions, first in Latin America and then in Hungary, where he teaches philosophy and ethics at Sarospatak Seminary.

Frank's book *A Way of Seeing*, may be ordered for 12 dollars plus postage. To inquire or order, email fsawyer777@gmail.com

Frank Sawyer
A Way of Seeing



Columns

From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til



We Christians confess with the universal church, "He descended into hell and on the third day he rose again." The *Heidelberg Catechism* says "he descended into hell" meaning that Christ suffered the agonies of hell on the cross. Sinless man-God, he took on our sins and was abandoned by God. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" he cried with Psalm 22. We can't imagine! Nor can our halting words describe desertion by God, which we will avoid because Christ submitted to it and saved us by his grace.

Post-Easter, why am I writing about hell? Well, hell is a hot topic right now (no flippancy intended). Rob Bell, an independent preacher from Michigan, has written a book that has people talking. You might think *Love Wins* is a title that simply assents to the truth that "God

Part of Rodin's sculpture *La Porte de L'Enfer* (1800s).

so loved the world that he gave his only Son," and so love triumphs. But Bell thinks that because "love wins" there is no hell, except when we make our own. (See Angela's editorial, May 9 CC).

The only God, who reveals himself in Scripture as Creator, Redeemer and Lord of all, also reveals over and over that he is a holy and just God whose very nature *must* detest sin and require payment for it. Bell doesn't like that God.

"Your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish" says Jesus in the parable of the Lost Sheep (Matt. 18:14, NIV; or: "It is not the will of my Father..." ESV). Bell says that since "God gets what God wants" no one will ultimately perish. But what Jesus clearly means is that, as a loving heavenly Father, God *of course* doesn't want any of his human creatures to die in their sins. Yet, tragically, many will: "They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved" (1 Thess. 2:10).

Did Jesus need to die?

It is crucial to remember that in saving us God's mercy did not overcome his justice (Bell forgets it or has rejected that truth). As Rev. Kevin De Young

'Friends don't let friends die without Jesus'

(University Reformed Church, Lansing, Mich.) puts it, it is not that "God saved us because he loves us so much he decided to look past our sins." God's justice was not removed by love. Rather, we are saved by God's justice being satisfied.

Jesus, the only One who could be that satisfaction for sin and God's justice, speaks of hell more often than any other person in the Bible. He should know! He suffered it so that we can avoid it. That's the Gospel he told his disciples they must go into all the world and preach. Why bother if rejecting him has no consequences? Why should they (or we) risk ourselves for a diluted "Gospel"? The Apostle Peter was willingly martyred for the real Good News of Christ. So were Paul, James, Stephen and countless thousands since then into our own age. Would you consent to die as they did if there were no eternal significance to that message not getting out? I wouldn't.

Why would Christ need to become human at all? If God's justice is obliterated by "love," Jesus' sacrifice wasn't a sacrifice. It was gratuitous (and truly sadistic). Then the Gospel is just another story and Christianity just another religion, though maybe a catalyst for some good works.

I've borrowed my title, a take-off on "Friends don't let friends drive drunk," from the roadside marquis of an evangelical church I passed last week. Those folks take the Good News of the Gospel and the bad news about hell seriously, as must any church or person bearing Christ's name.

Jesus did not die in vain and the situation is deadly urgent. "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few," he told the 72 he sent ahead of him. So, what are we to do? Rethink God into our own "loving" 21st century image so that we feel better about him and his "exclusive" Gospel?

Jesus' answer is now as it was then: "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. I am sending you out like sheep among wolves" (Luke 10:1-3). It's still a matter of spiritual life and death. And sometimes the messengers get shot (or hung, burnt or beheaded, and tortured first). But "Friends don't let friends die without Jesus." >

Notes from the blogosphere:

For an insightful analysis of *Love Wins*, see Kevin De Young's blog: thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung

Also excellent is Albert Mohler's review: albertmohler.com

Our World Today

Bert Hielema



Why do I live the way I live? It all started in 1972 when I had a true conversion. Two books changed my life: *The Limits of Growth*, published by the Club of Rome, which made me realize that we live in a finite world, and *Sterven... and dan?* (*What Happens After Death?*), written by a minister, which convinced me that our future life is in the New Creation.

My conversion is still proceeding, so I am always expanding my insight. Lately I am into two books: *The Coming of the Kingdom*, by the late Dr. Herman Ridderbos, and *Christianity: the first three thousand years*, by Diarmaid MacCulloch. Ridderbos taught in Kampen, the Netherlands and MacCulloch is a professor of church history at Oxford.

Ridderbos starts his book as follows: "The central theme of Jesus' message... is the coming of the Kingdom of God." Later on he states that "the Kingdom of God is a purely future and eschatological event, presupposing the end of this world; and, therefore, cannot possibly reveal itself in this world... It is nothing but the commencement of the new world, expected in the apocalyptic literature, which will reveal itself after the catastrophic upheaval of the present area."

I believe that we now have entered this catastrophic upheaval. While writing this I am wondering whether Jesus, on Judgement Day, will ask me, "What have you, Egbert Drewes Hielema, done to reduce your carbon footprint?" Carbon footprint refers to the greenhouse gases my lifestyle generates.

The church's calling

The other book deals with the role Christianity is playing in shaping human history and the challenges facing the church today. Early on in the book, MacCulloch writes that in the Lord's Prayer, in the line "Give us this day our daily bread," the Greek word for 'daily' is *epiousios*, which, he claims, does not mean 'daily' at all. MacCulloch writes "if we assign any meaning to *epiousios* it may point to the new time of the coming kingdom." This perfectly fits with the preceding lines in the prayer that Jesus taught us: "Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven," and also confirms Ridderbos's statement that Jesus' mission is mainly kingdom-oriented. After all, Jesus is not suddenly switching to a totally different subject. No, he constantly remains kingdom-focused. The petition,

May our lives reflect the coming kingdom

then, commonly interpreted as "Give us this day our daily bread" has nothing to do with providing today's nutrition and everything to do with the Kingdom that is to come. In essence it says: "May our life today reflect the coming Kingdom."

It's interesting to note that the line "Give us this day our daily bread" clashes with the rest of Matthew 6. A bit later, Jesus, rather than us asking to pray for our daily bread, in fact urges us not to be concerned with 'what we shall eat and what we shall drink,' because that is something the godless pursue, because in our day-to-day living our life should be fully concerned with 'the kingdom to come.' Our goal is not food, drink, clothing, housing, trips, entertainment, you name it—that is the aim of non-Christians. Instead, we, his people, should be concerned



How can we hasten God's kingdom on earth?

with "the Kingdom to come," preparing for eternal life in the New Creation.

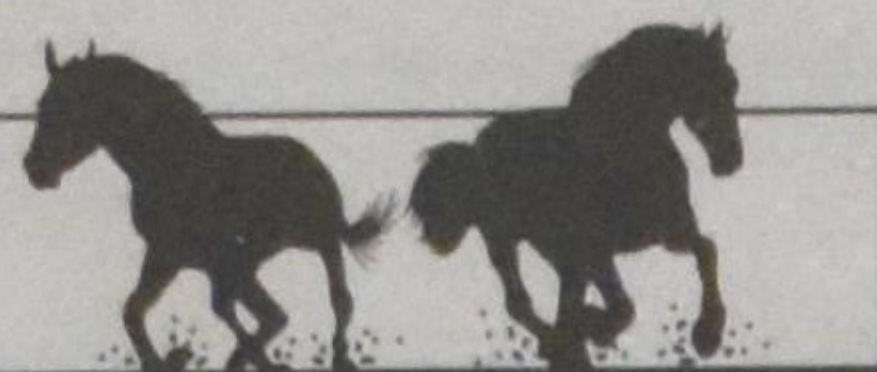
When we take stock of the world today, we see extreme turmoil (Ridderbos' catastrophic upheaval), including with the environment. People are groping for direction and not finding it anywhere. The church, by and large, is a passive onlooker in all this, having mostly lost the true Kingdom vision, uncertain about heaven, and yet not wanting to embrace the coming of the New Creation.

If my premise that we live in the Last Days is correct, and if Ridderbos' analysis is true, and if MacCulloch's interpretation of 'daily' urges us to prepare for the Kingdom to come, the church's failure to promote this may explain why there is a curious statement in Revelation 21:22: "I did not see a temple in the City." In the New Creation there will be no church or synagogue. >

Bert Hielema's two latest books deal with these 'last-day' matters. He can be reached at bert@hielem.ca.

Words from Wild Horses

Kenny Warkentin



Last month I participated in a one-day conference on gender, where I spoke on the stages of development regarding same-gender attraction. In preparing for the topic, I read numerous books and articles and found many interesting facts on the subject.

I made notes, interjecting my own story within the often-dry facts, and created a powerpoint for the visual learners.

Every time I am invited to share my journey out of a gay identity, I am honoured and take it very seriously. I consider it pure joy to have walked this path, even through the hardships, struggles, temptations and battles that have taken place. I see a much bigger God because of it. So this invitation was no different than the rest. But it ended up being something of a first for me. As we entered the church, there seemed to be a buzz of anticipation regarding this topic. The room was packed. Usually, events like this draw a handful of people, but this one was larger and people seemed keen to understand the issue. This impacted me at an emotional level that I had not experienced in a long time. On more than one occasion, I had to swallow to hold back the emotions so I could get through the topic.

The day progressed – participants eagerly asked questions and sharing in group discussions. The hum of understanding swelled among the congregation. It was beautiful to see understanding and compassion meld together in unison.

Then, at the very end of the event, when one of the speakers was winding down the conference, a middle-aged man stood up. He wanted to make a statement. (Even as I write this, tears well up inside me). Silence filled the room as he stood before us. He cleared his throat and then began. He wanted to apologize on behalf of the church for not loving those who struggle with this issue. He asked for forgiveness for remaining silent when he could have shown love. He repented for not learning about the issues of same gender, instead remaining ignorant and uncaring. It was a highly emotional response and I am not sure there was a dry eye in the room. The last speaker who had remained on stage openly wept as this man repented and asked for forgiveness. When he was finished speaking, the speaker (still weeping)

Called into fullness

accepted the apology and thanked him for his vulnerability and loving response, and then the two men embraced.

What repentance triggers

The leader went on to say that he has been speaking on the topic of same gender attraction for nearly 20 years and this was the first time anyone had ever done that. It deeply impacted him, as – more often than not – the church community has turned a blind eye to those who struggle with homosexuality, hoping that the issue goes away or someone else deals with it rather than stepping up to become a healing community that loves and embraces. For myself, I saw a community eager to learn and understand, rather than remain closed off in ignorance regarding the complex issue of gender attraction. Deep healing happened within me as I witnessed this embrace between these two men.

My prayer is that this begins to happen in the whole body of Christ. That we become a healing community that loves and embraces all people. That we become a body

that doesn't just turn a blind eye at one part, but looks at the whole body and comes to realize that we all need each other. Those who are struggling with same-gender attraction need the body of Christ to call them forth into the fullness of who God has designed them to be, restored and whole. Heck, we all need that. None of us are exempt in our need of others to speak life to us. A lot of us continue to walk in distorted views of ourselves and that's why we need others. Maybe that begins with the posture of the repentant man, who initiated something at that conference. He confessed his own lack, his own apathy and asked for forgiveness. Maybe as we do that, we will attract more people to the body of Christ rather than repel people away from what they desperately need – each other. May we become the healing communities that Christ is calling us to be. ➤

Kenny Warkentin (kennyp66@gmail.com) works full-time as an urban missionary with Living Waters Canada and is an artist and musician. He lives in Winnipeg with his wife and daughter.

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove



Contemporary life continuously challenges us to make choices that reflect our values. Sometimes these choices need to be re-evaluated. Not because we previously made the wrong choice, but because we can change and outgrow certain ways of being. Making different choices, however, can be unsettling, since it's a bit like upsetting the apple cart.

Q. I am 48, married, with three adult children: two have left the nest and one daughter is still at home. I was a stay-at-home mother for the first ten years of our married life, then worked part-time for the next ten years. Since then I have worked full-time. Our household has always been busy and full of life. Now I am longing for some down time. Over the last years, I feel I have been on the fast track. My spouse, however, seems to thrive in this climate. Lately, I have been dropping hints we may want to evaluate our lifestyle. But he reminds me that my work income gives us the extras in life such as a trip or two a year, the upkeep of our spacious home, and our ability to entertain friends and family without penny-pinching. I understand all that, but I prefer a more leisurely lifestyle.

Looking back, I realize I also have gone along with the two-income family lifestyle because of the 'extras' we were able to enjoy over the

last years. It has brought richness to our lives, especially in terms of travel. Most years I also received some satisfaction from working outside the home. But something no longer feels right to me. I go to work, keep the house clean and orderly, plan our next evening of entertaining, assist in some aspects of church activities, make space to connect with my friends, keep in touch with our two sons and daughter. I could go on and on. I have not read a book from beginning to end for close to a year.

A. If you enjoy reading and you have not read a book for a year, something is not working for you. I also think you feel overwhelmed by your responsibilities. You seem to have a lot on your plate. This may work for a while but if you have been juggling for a long time, your coping skills will break down. From your description of your life it seems you have had a taste of enjoyable perks as a result of your double income status. But now you want to make a change. You prefer a more quiet life.

First, I suggest you try to visualize what your life may look like with

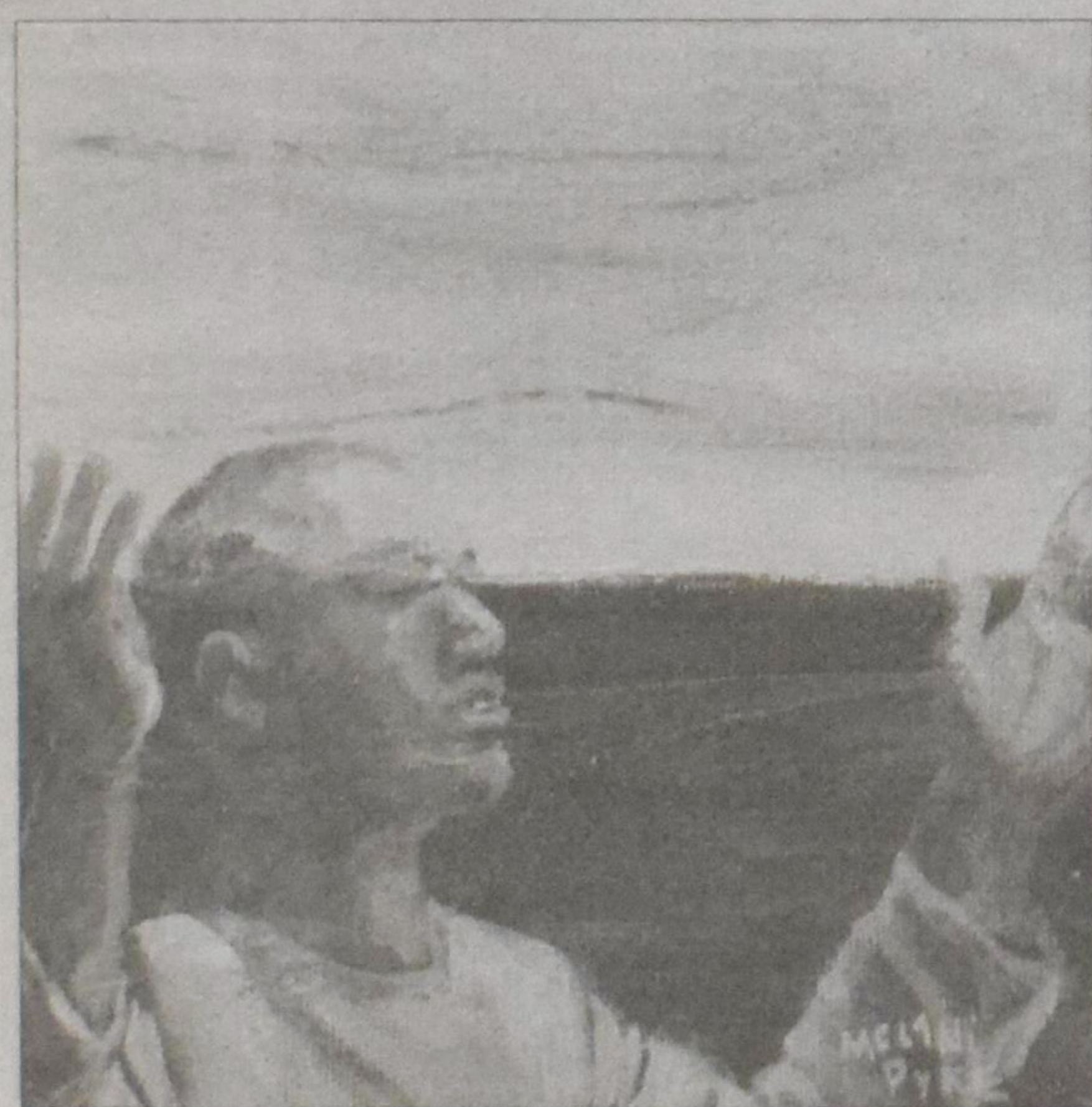


more down time available. Second, I would suggest that, rather than dropping hints, you have a straight-forward talk with your spouse. Some men are still socialized in a way that makes the annual family income an important aspect of what matters most in life. There are, however, other 'incomes' worth pursuing, such as emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual. While they are not as tangible as

money, these forms of 'incomes' actually say more about who we are as persons. Third, I would suggest you begin to streamline your life – before quitting your work – so you can have a taste of what is to come. Ask yourself what it feels like to say 'no' to possible requests from family or friends. Also ask yourself what it feels like to have less stimulation in your life. Like any situation, there are pros and cons to the changes you want to make.

I hope these practical steps will help you get a clearer understanding of how you may want to move forward so that you can get off the fast track and live in a way that soothes your spirit as well as your soul. ➤

Arlene Van Hove (avanhove@shaw.ca) is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC.




Psalm 130: With You There is Forgiveness

This psalm is a beautiful song of forgiveness. For the painting, I did the bottom half black and red to stand for the old ways of darkness, and the top half light and green like new growth.

Melanie Pyke (melpyke.com)

Classifieds

Birthdays	Anniversaries	Obituary
 <p>Sisters Alida C. VanderSchoor Brinkman of Whitby, Ontario and Paula VanderSchoor Dekker of Heemstede, the Netherlands,</p> <p>were both born May 23, 1921. They have been many miles apart for many years but have always been very close together in their hearts. These identical twins will be celebrating, D.V., their ninetieth birthday together. As the large VanderSchoor family gathers in Zandaam this June, we thank the Lord for giving us the loving presence of both these sisters, mothers, aunts, Omas, and great-Omas, who have been a blessing to so many. There is always a smile on these sisters' faces, and a word of encouragement for others.</p> <p>90th birthday wishes for Alida Brinkman can be sent to Apt. 207, 200 Glenhill Drive S Whitby ON L1N 9W2.</p> <p>A birthday tea will be held in Durham Christian Homes (Whitby) on May 25, at 10 am. All friends are welcome.</p>	<p>1961 Renfrew, ON 2011</p> <p>With thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for his presence, care and guidance, we joyfully announce the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our dear parents and Opa & Oma.</p>  <p>GEERT AND GERRIE VANDER PLOEG (nee Prins)</p> <p>We invite you to celebrate this special occasion with us at an Open House to be held, the Lord willing, at the Horton Community Centre, 1005 Castleford Road, Renfrew, on Saturday, May 21, 2011 from 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.</p> <p>Marlene & Willem Verhulst Zachary, Cole Arthur & Christine Vander Ploeg Nathan, Emily Annette & Marcel Woertink Michelle, Brandon, Allison, Alexander Linda & Kevin Wingfield Jaclyn, Danielle, Jessica Brian & Mireya Vander Ploeg Edwin, Bryan Pauline & Rob Ke Jemma Gerald & Amanda Vander Ploeg Samuel, Benjamin Jonanthan Vander Ploeg & Michala</p> <p>Home address: 1446 Castleford Rd Renfrew ON K7V 3Z8</p>	 <p>February 1, 1928 May 1, 2011 Lutten, The Netherlands Thunder Bay, Ontario</p> <p><i>"I lift up my eyes to the hills - where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."</i> Psalm 121:1-2</p> <p>MAATJE VAN ELBURG (nee Bakker)</p> <p>entered into her Saviour's presence on Sunday afternoon, May 1, 2011.</p> <p>She was dearly loved and will be missed by her husband of 54 years, Johan.</p> <p>Her children and grandchildren:</p> <p>Jenny and Henry Mol - Thunder Bay, Ontario Kevin and Sarah (Benjamin) Robert and Kristen (Kaleb) Gary and Breana Brian and Robyn Derek Marianne and Archie Nugteren - Wisconsin, USA Erica Leah Lynden Joanne and Tim Pasma - London, Ontario Christopher and Kaitlyn Robert Daniel Lauren Gerald and Tammy Van Elburg - Thunder Bay Joseph Devin Fred and Julie Van Elburg - Thunder Bay Jared Adam Jordan Kara</p> <p>Her sisters Riek Bosman - The Netherlands Jantje De Jonge - The Netherlands</p> <p>Her brothers Simon (Ids) Bakker - Alberta Tjeerd Bakker - Alberta</p> <p>Correspondence: Johan H. Van Elburg 117-1261 Jasper Drive Thunder Bay ON P7B 6Z4</p>
 <p>Harry (Harmannus) Roffel 85 YEARS BLESSED June 16, 2011</p> <p>We invite you to join us as we celebrate 85 years of God's faithfulness and goodness to our father, grandfather and great-grandfather.</p> <p>OPEN HOUSE - Saturday, June 18, 2011 from 2 - 4pm Holland Christian Homes Harmony Hall 7900 McLaughlin Rd Brampton, ON L6Y 5A7</p> <p><i>Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits</i> Psalm 103:2</p> <p>No gifts please</p> <p>Correspondence address: 7900 McLaughlin Rd S Trinity 516 Brampton ON L6V 3N2</p>	<p>The Children and Grandchildren invite you to join us in celebrating the 50th Anniversary of</p> <p>Rev. RON AND GERRY FISHER (nee Vanderhill)</p> <p>Strathroy, 1961 June 15 Waterloo, 2011</p> <p>We will be holding an Open House at Waterloo Christian Reformed Church 209 Baringer Road Waterloo, Ontario N2L 5W3 (519) 746-5727</p> <p>On Saturday, June 11, 2011 from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.</p> <p><i>For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.</i> Psalm 100:5</p> <p>Cards may be sent to their home at: 628 Spinnaker Crescent, Waterloo ON N2K 4A5</p>	<p>For classified ads, e.g. obituaries and anniversaries, contact Rose by email: rose@christiancourier.ca or call 1-800-9694838</p>
<p>Vacation</p> <p>Holiday accomodation in Holland with vehicle rentals and tours. www.chestnutlane.nl</p>	<p>Margaret's Cozy Hillside Bed & Breakfast</p> <p>2 rooms- each has queen sized & single bed. Outstanding home-cooked breakfast. 10 minutes from Drayton Theatre in Moorefield. Call 519-638-2817</p> <p>Hollandse Dag</p> <p>June 15 10:00 am at First CRC, 310 Kingscourt Avenue, Kingston, Ont. Speaker : Rev. Nicolaas Cornelisse For Info call : 613 - 546 - 5615</p>	<p>De Hollandse Dag</p> <p>wordt dit jaar weer gevierd op Woensdag 8 Junie om 10 uur in de Moorefield Community Center. Intree \$ 10 per persoon.</p> <p>Samenzang; Voordrachten; Muziek by Ted Lucas en de Zingende Sysjes.</p> <p>Spreker Ds Harry vander Windt. Breng uw eigen lunch en koffie kop.</p> <p>Vry koffie en koek.</p> <p>Een jaar is weer voorby, en daarom zyn we o zo bly. We hebben het al lang geweten, dat we de "Hollandse Dag" niet kunnen vergeten.</p> <p>Voor meer informatie bel Roelie Katerberg. Drayton.Tel 519-638-2228.</p>

Classifieds

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Broccoli and Tortellini Salad

Ingredients

- 6 slices bacon
- 20 ounces fresh cheese-filled tortellini
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 2 teaspoons cider vinegar
- 3 heads fresh broccoli, cut into florets
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup sunflower seeds
- 1 red onion, finely chopped

Directions

Place bacon in a large, deep skillet. Cook over medium high heat until evenly brown. Drain, crumble and set aside. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Cook tortellini in boiling water for 8 to 10 minutes or until al dente. Drain, and rinse under cold water.

In a small bowl, mix together mayonnaise, sugar and vinegar to make the dressing.

In a large bowl, combine broccoli, tortellini, bacon, raisins, sunflower seeds and red onion. Pour dressing over salad, and toss.

**I am vegetarian so I don't use the bacon and it's still good.*

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For more information regarding investment with Elim Village, contact Terry-Lynn Dryfhout at tld@elimvillage.com or call 604.583.3546 Ext 4031
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4				8	1		6	
	6	8		5		9	2	1
	5					8	7	
			3		8			
	3	4					9	
6	8	9		2		3	5	
	2		8	3				4
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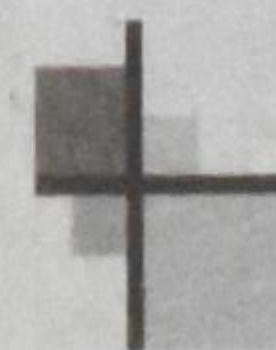
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June 15 Hollandse Dag 10:00 am at First Christian Reformed Church, 310 Kingscourt Ave. **Kingston**, Ont. Speaker: Rev. Nicolaas Cornelisse. For Info call: 613-546-5615

June 25 A Vision Shared: Join family, friends, colleagues, and supporters of Ren Siebenga in a celebration of his first 42 years of service to the Christian education community. Toronto District Christian High, Woodbridge, Ont. info@tdchristian.ca or 416-410-9834. See ad.

July 1 Frisian picnic at starting at 11 a.m. at Pinehurst Lake Conservation Area, **Paris**, Ontario on Highway 24A (4 miles north of Paris) Contact us at: fryskedei@hotmail.com.



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Donating by text-message: does it work?

Matthew Shaer

(CSM) – In 2008, United Way bought a sliver of airtime during Super Bowl XLII for an ad highlighting the charity's youth fitness initiative. The charity asked viewers to pick up their cellphone and send the word "FIT" to a six-digit number; for each text message received, the viewer's cellphone would debit \$5 from his or her account.

The Super Bowl spot raised \$10,000 – not exactly a seismic haul, but a solid showing for an ad that lasted all of 10 seconds. And it opened up a whole new industry.

Over the past two years, text giving, which once represented only a tiny portion of overall donations in the United States, has quickly become a major component of many successful philanthropic campaigns. Non-profits have adopted the technology as a way to collect small donations from a large pool of givers; groups such as the Red Cross have launched major campaigns. Analysts

say that text message donations are a good match for the pace of 21st-century life: The process is fast, simple, and requires nothing more than a device that most Americans have in their pockets.

Drawbacks

Building a text message campaign, however, is a relatively complicated process. In most cases, a charity must first approach a middleman, such as the Mobile Giving Foundation. The MGF will vet the charity to make sure it meets a range of criteria, including minimum revenue stream and good standing with the Better Business Bureau. If the organization is approved, the MGF works with US carriers to set up a fund-raising campaign; consumers are encouraged to text donations to a predetermined number. The carriers pass those funds to the MGF, which in turn

Phone Bill

Charity A \$5
Charity B \$10
Charity A \$5



hands over the money to the charity. The carriers do not levy a surcharge on the donors, but organizations are charged by the MGF for some incidental costs.

Even after all these hurdles, there remains much debate about how organizations should actually use texting. Some critics have

argued that by relying too heavily on text donations, charities lose a chance to have a relationship with donors.

Allison Fine, the author of "Momentum: Igniting Social Change in the Connected Age," recently wrote on her website that she was concerned about text message giving. "It's certainly not a panacea, and may be best used as part of an immediate crisis or disaster responses," Ms. Fine noted. "However, it may not be as useful when the initial crisis begins to wane.... It seems

to me that relationship building with a first engagement being a cellphone number is going to be inherently difficult."

For now, text message donations resemble online giving at the close of the 20th century, argues Nicole Wallace, a senior writer at the Chronicle of Philanthropy. The technology is relatively new, and organizations are working hard to figure out the best way to harness it. "I think the prevailing wisdom among fund-raising types is that text messages seem to work best when there's a pressing issue," Ms. Wallace says. "The question is whether there's a way to translate that into non-disaster giving, like a local social arts group, or a smaller non-profit. That will be the test."

No need to text us to donate. You can donate on-line at christiancourier.ca Your gifts and continued support through subscriptions and advertising are greatly appreciated.

News



A lonely, depressed 15 year-old amputee.



A caring teacher changed this boy's life.



Leprosy is not as contagious as people believe.

A world without leprosy

Maria Smedes

NILPHAMARI, Bangladesh — Leprosy is one of the oldest recorded diseases. Because it causes severe deformities and hardships for those affected by it, social stigma ostracizes patients from their community and even their families. Leprosy comes from a bacillus called *mycobacterium leprae*, transferred much like a common cold. But only a small percentage of the general population is susceptible to this bacteria. Those who live in poverty are at the highest risk because their immune systems may be compromised. The damaging effects begin with a loss of sensation in limbs, eyes and nasal passages, then paralysis of hands and feet. The losses

of fingers, toes, eyebrows and facial hair, as well as a collapse of the nose, complete the disfigurement.

For centuries people with leprosy have been considered cursed. Because people fear the disease, they often delay diagnosis. When not treated immediately, however, leprosy causes severe and irreversible damage. Few employers will hire someone with leprosy. The children of men and women with leprosy are often refused entrance into public schools.

In 1982, leprosy became 100 percent curable. If the disease is stopped in its earliest stages, there is no long-term physical damage. Yet in regions of high poverty and low

education such as rural Bangladesh, many still do not know they can be healed.

The Danish Bangladesh Leprosy Mission (DBLM), north of the capital Dhaka, belongs to the Leprosy Mission International. It provides high-level holistic care for 1,500 patients annually. The Mission also works in the community to identify health needs, draw up visual goals for disabled members, provide micro-financing and lobby the government for the needs of the poor.

These rural Bangladeshis have simple lives and are used to hard work. The majority is Muslim or Hindu; only one percent is Christian. Electricity is not available in all areas, and the overall literacy rate is only 37 percent. Male dominance is part of the social structure, meaning that women's and children's health, education and rights issues are not emphasized. Women are still abused regularly; early marriages and births by non-qualified attendants cause health problems in mothers and disabilities in children.

The care of Christ

There are many stories to tell. In the one village, we visited a blind elderly man with leprosy, his almost-blind wife also afflicted. They were banned from moving into the village. This thread-bare couple had no electricity, no running water and no latrine. Leprosy Staff are trying to drill a well, obtain operations for their eyes and give them a stipend. As we talked with them, a crowd gathered. One staff member addressed the crowd, saying that sitting with this couple, or even hugging them, would not transfer leprosy. One bold man replied: "But you are being paid to care for them."

We also visited a school where the headmaster, a very caring and dedicated

teacher, took time to work with children with disabilities. We saw how one boy of about 10, with severely deformed fingers due to leprosy, could write beautifully. How another beautiful, blue-eyed deaf-mute girl of about 12 was being taught through sign language by the teacher, who learned it just to educate her.

**Leprosy
has been
100 percent
curable
since 1982.**

We met a single man in his mid-40s who had developed leprosy in his early teens. He had never married because he felt that with leprosy he could not support a family. He lived in a straw home with metal roof. He takes care of his 80-year-old mother, who suffered a stroke about eight months ago. She was comatose, lying on a bed of straw covered with plastic on the clay ground. The son, a very caring man, took care of all her needs: feeding, cleaning, and clothing. There are no nursing homes in Bangladesh! The man had a very smelly leprosy ulcer on his foot, and we felt he needed hospitalization in order to save his leg. But he refused to leave, saying "Who would take care of my mother?" We left disheartened. Leprosy Staff will follow up.

The work of Leprosy Mission International is vital. The people it helps are some of the poorest people in the world: not only poor but also sick, disabled and stigmatized against. Since the economic downturn, Leprosy Mission has seen a substantial drop in donations. But a world without leprosy is possible. The staff we met overwhelmed us with their dedication and care. Above all, this is a Christian mission. They start each day with singing, prayer and Bible study, and spend their time reaching out in the ways Jesus taught us. It truly amazes me again and again how the Lord uses people from many different cultures and backgrounds to bring about his love and care to people in need.

Allan & Maria Smedes spent four months volunteering at the Danish Bangladesh Leprosy Mission (DBLM) Hospital in Nilphamari, Bangladesh. Allan, an RN, worked with the nurses doing ulcer care while Maria did data entry in the Community Care Office. See leprosy.ca for more information. The Smedes live in Grimsby, Ontario.



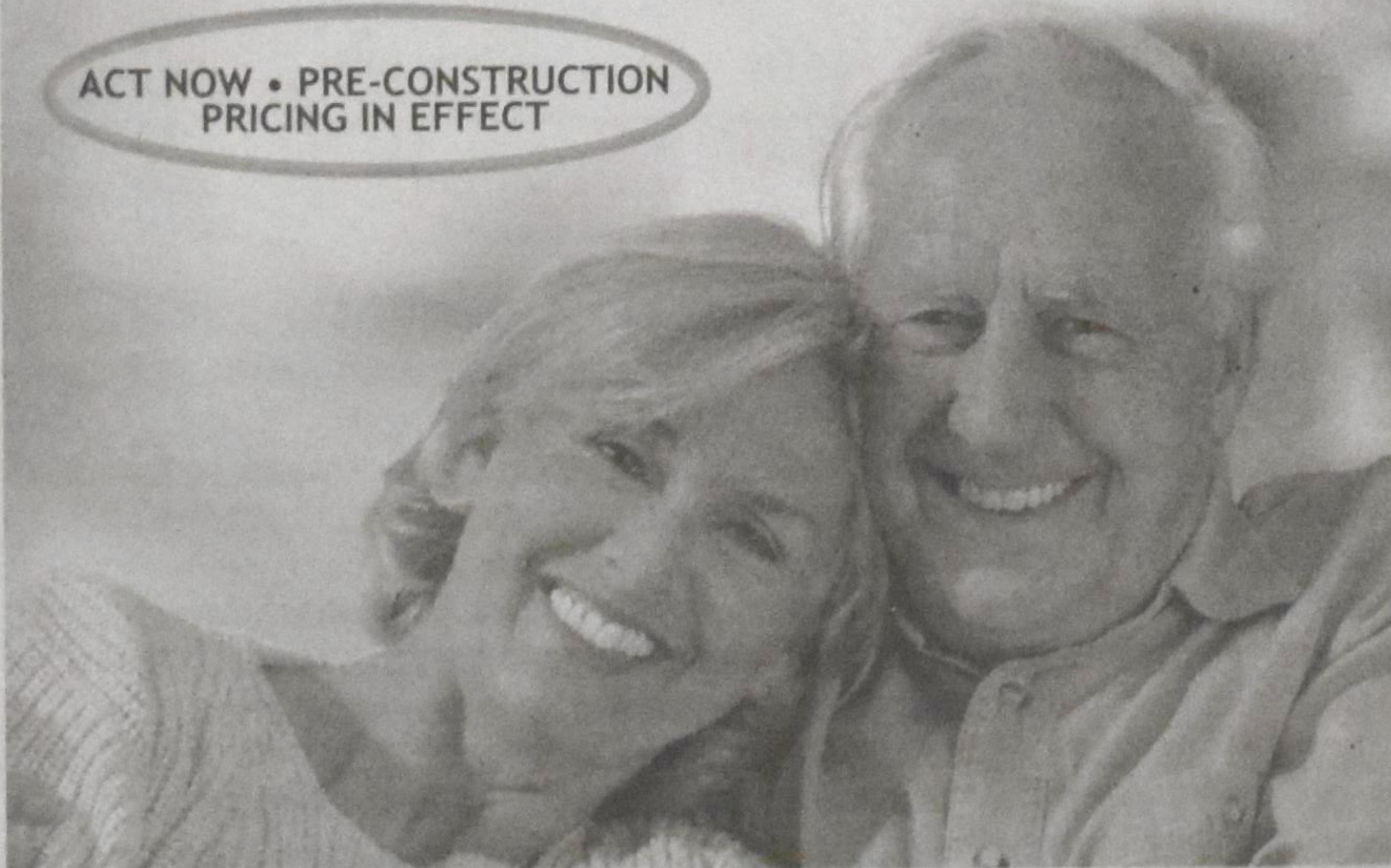
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